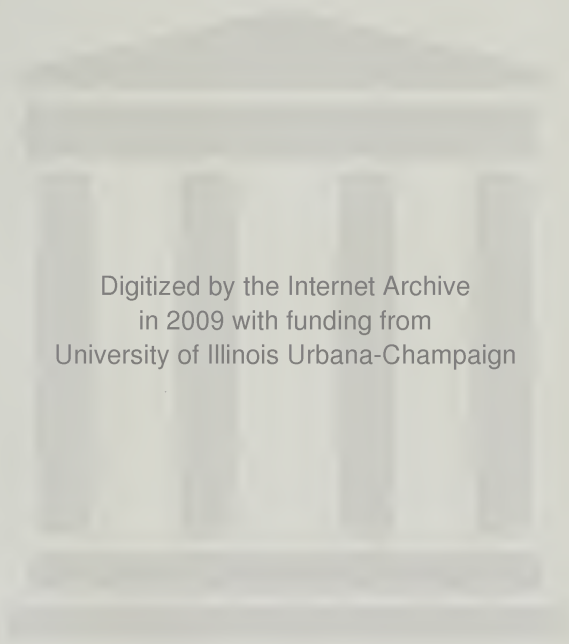




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THE  
JACQUERIE.

VOL. II.



THE  
JACQUERIE;

OR,  
THE LADY AND THE PAGE:

*An Historical Romance.*

BY  
G. P. R. JAMES, ESQ.

AUTHOR OF  
"THE GIPSY," "THE ROBBER," "THE GENTLEMAN OF THE  
OLD SCHOOL," ETC. ETC. ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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THE  
JACQUERIE.

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CHAPTER I.

THE moment that the man who held Adela by the arm saw that the flight of quarrels and arrows had ceased, he threw up the visor of his casque, exposing to view the fierce and dogged countenance of the man called Maillot. By his gestures he was evidently speaking aloud; but for a moment or two the noise and confusion, both on the battlements and under the walls, prevented one word that he uttered from being heard.

The Lord of Mauvinet eagerly waved his hand, however, exclaiming, " Silence, silence !

— Hear what he says ! Not a word, upon your lives ! ”

A sudden pause instantly succeeded ; and the contrast was strange, when, after that scene of strife and confusion, and shouts and outcries, a deep stillness suddenly fell over the whole scene, and a robin, unscared by all that had preceded, was heard singing in a willow tree by the side of the moat.

“ Mark,” cried Maillot, rolling his fierce eyes over the party that stood under the barbican and upon the bridge, “ Mark, and take warning, every man of you ! Another bolt from a cross-bow shot against this castle, another blow from an axe struck against that gate, and I cast her headlong down ! I know how to deal with you, Lord of Mauvinet ! You now know how to have your daughter without ransom. If you like her better dead than living, bend your bows ! If not, draw off your men, for I am in no mood for jesting.”

The heart of the Lord of Mauvinet burnt within him. To be foiled by a pitiful band of adventurers in the attack of so poor a place,



was a disgrace which no knightly heart could well endure ; and yet to risk his daughter's life, or by his own act to see her slain before his face, was what could scarcely be expected of a father.

“Villain,” he cried, after looking round his people for a moment, as if seeking counsel, “villain, you triumph now ; but the time will come when I will have vengeance, and bitter shall that vengeance be !”

“Vengeance !” shouted Maillot at the top of his voice. “Vengeance, by the Lord ! If such be your purpose, let your vengeance come now !—I will have mine first ;” and at the same moment he seized Adela with a tighter grasp, and dragged her a step forward, as if to cast her over the battlements.

The poor girl's shrieks rent the air, and though many a bow was drawn by the party below, no one durst shoot at the murderous villain, for fear of striking the object of his cruelty. The Lord of Mauvinet, with his eye fixed upon him, stretched out his hand for a crossbow, resolved to risk all to save her from the terrible death that menaced her ; but in the

midst of that moment of horror, there came a loud cry from the angle of the wall close to Maillot, and the savage paused, turning his head to the side from which the sounds proceeded.

In an instant two soldiers, who stood beside him, were dashed to the ground; and before he, or those who were below, could well see what was coming, with a spring like that of a tiger the Captal de Buch was upon him; and, wrenching his grasp from Adela, who sunk fainting upon the ground, the knight clasped the brutal plunderer in his powerful arms, and a terrible, though momentary struggle, took place between them; while the swords of Albert Denyn and a number of the captal's followers kept the space around clear of the adventurers, who hurried boldly up to the defence of their companion.

“Now, wretch, now!” exclaimed the captal, dragging the marauder forward to the edge of the battlement, in spite of his resistance —  
“Now you shall taste the same fate yourself that you destined for another.”

The man finding himself mastered, clung to

the captal with the strength both of despair and rage, determined to drag him over the low coping, if he were forced to try the terrible leap himself. Still the captal drew him on to the very edge, lifting him in his athletic arms to cast him over, while Maillot twined around him for life and vengeance; and twice they struggled together fiercely, the one to retain his grasp, the other to cast it off. At length, however, the knight, as if wearied with the strife, and resolved to slay his adversary with the sword, relaxed his hold; and Maillot suddenly drew back from his fierce embrace; but the instant he did so, the captal, without drawing his sword, smote him in the face with his gauntleted hand, and the man fell prostrate before him. Like lightning the knight caught him again in his arms, swung him high above the parapet; and, ere he could resume his grasp, pitched him over into mid-air, with a scream of terror bursting from his lips. The unhappy wretch fell first upon the chain of the draw-bridge, and a gush of blood upon the planks showed the terrible force of his descent. He

then rolled over with a deep groan, and plunged into the moat, sinking at once to the bottom, and, encumbered with his armour, never rising again.

“On, on ! my Lord of Mauvinet,” shouted the captal, waving his hand to the count, and drawing his sword. “Your child is safe, and we will soon open the gates for you. The dogs have had their day, but it is over now.”

Thus saying, he gently raised Adela from the ground ; and though he dared not at that moment pause to call her back to recollection, he placed her safely in an angle of the wall, with her head leaning upon the battlements, while he hastened to head his men in the fierce contention which they were waging around him with the rest of the adventurers. The captal’s troop, indeed, was much out-numbered by the men within the castle : but the attack upon the gate had been renewed by the Lord of Mauvinet and his party ; and scattered, confused, and disheartened at finding the enemy within their walls, the free companions offered an ill-conducted but desperate resistance. Albert Denyn

and the rest were already driving them on towards the court, when the captal again took the lead, and his greater military skill and experience at once taught him to act upon a different plan.

“To the gate, Albert, to the gate!” he cried: “always keep open your communication with your own friends. Ten of you hold firm the way up to the platform, Albert and the rest follow me. This way must lead to the gate!” and, rushing on at full speed, he soon turned the angle of the court, where a considerable body of the marauders were defending the entrance against the troops of Mauvinet.

The attack upon their rear at once put them into confusion; and while a terrible slaughter took place amongst them, two or three of the captal’s men forced their way on till they reached the chains of the gate, and drew up the portcullis. The troops of Mauvinet rushed in, and in a moment the castle was gained; while the adventurers, flying from court to court, for some time received little quarter from their enraged enemies.

When Adela opened her eyes, and raised her head from the stone against which it lay, she found herself quite alone, though the confused sounds which met her ears on every side, the clang of arms, the shouts, the cries, the screams, recalled painfully to her mind all the terrible circumstances of her situation, and showed her that the strife was still going on. She sat up and listened, with an aching brow and a palpitating heart; but the noise seemed to diminish and come from a greater distance, and then a loud shout and some laughter, mingling with the sadder sounds, announced that some party had won the day.

With fear and hope struggling together, Adela raised herself faintly from the ground, and gazed over the country from the battlements. The multitude which had appeared before the walls when last her terrified eyes had been turned to the slope before the castle, looking for help and consolation in her deadly terror, and finding none, had now totally disappeared. A few men were seen in the barbican, a few standing in-

active upon the bridge; but with joy inexpressible Adela recognised the colours of the house of Mauvinet amongst them, and in a moment after some rapid steps were heard approaching.

It was more with hope than fear that the heart of Adela beat now, and supporting herself by the wall she gazed eagerly forward, till those who approached had turned the angle of the wall, and she beheld the form of the Capital de Buch, followed by two or three of her father's attendants. A sudden terror then took possession of her regarding her father, and she exclaimed, "My father? my lord capital, where is my father?"

"He is not hurt! No, dear lady, no," exclaimed the capital — "he is not hurt, and, thanks be to Heaven, very few are so, but those who themselves deserved to suffer for their baseness. I have outrun your father, and come hither to seek you and bring you to him. He is even now in the castle hall, caring for the wounded. The fierceness of the strife is over; those who still resist are not many, and doubt-



less they will be received to mercy if they will yield."

"Oh! show them mercy, my lord capital," cried Adela eagerly: "we should not be cruel because they have been so."

"Come, then, lady, and plead for them yourself," said the capital. "The whole body will soon be in your father's presence. Lean upon my arm, for I see you are faint and weak; but I trust you will soon be well again, now this sad day's business is so happily accomplished. These are thunder showers, lady, that beat down the flowers; but they raise their heads refreshed when the storm is over."

Adela leant upon the capital's arm as he desired her, for she could not in courtesy refuse but, to say truth, she would more willingly have gone alone, although of the two things which alone remained upon her memory concerning her deliverance from the grasp of Maillot, the most prominent was that it was the capital who had come to her aid.

The other recollection that came back to her mind was a faint image of Albert Denyn,



sword in hand, amongst a fierce troop of the adventurers; and she would fain have inquired for him, she would fain have asked if he was hurt. But her lips refused to pronounce his name, and she suffered the captal to lead her on in silence. A few steps brought them down a gentle slope which led from the platform above the gate into the outer court, and Adela shuddered and shut her eyes, as she was obliged to choose her steps amongst the dead that lay opposite the entrance, and the pools of blood which had collected round them.

“The struggle was fierce here,” said the captal, feeling her hand tremble as he led her on; “the inner court is clearer, however. — Morvin,” he continued, speaking to one of the men who followed him, “let those bodies be looked to; there may be some of the poor wretches not dead yet. That man’s arm moved as we passed — his with the red feather.”

Thus saying, he led Adela onward, up the steps to the door of the great hall, from which issued forth the sounds of many voices. It was a large vaulted chamber, fully fifty

feet in length; but it appeared at that moment so crowded by different groups of followers attached to the house of Mauvinet, that at first Adela could not see to the other end, though the towering height of the capital gave him a view over the heads of the rest.

“There is your father,” he said: “the strife is all over now, it seems.” But at the same moment, some of those who were near the door turned their eyes upon the lady, and one or two voices pronounced, “The Lady Adela!”

All the retainers hastened to make way for her; while the count sprang forward from the other end of the hall, and casting away his bloody sword, clasped her tenderly to his bosom.

Father and child both wept for several moments in silence, while the armed men, with whom the hall was filled, formed a circle round; and Albert Denyn, who had raised the count's sword, stood a step behind him, with a cheek pale with emotion, and eyes bent upon the ground.

The count had not recovered himself enough

to speak to any one, when, from the other side of the hall, a group of several persons entered, amongst whom were six or seven men with their hands tied, with four women and an infant.

“ Oh my father !” exclaimed Adela, “ spare them, spare them, and treat them kindly, for well and kindly have they treated me. — Weep not, lady,” she continued, advancing to one of the women, and taking her hand, “ my father will show you all courtesy for my sake, I am sure.”

“ I war not with women and children,” said the count, speaking to the wife of Griffith : “ I leave that to those who have cast off the character of soldiers and of men, to assume the habits of savage beasts. Madam, you shall be kindly dealt with, and sent in safety whithersoever you wish to go. — Lead the lady and her women away, Montel, and with ten of the freshest horses guide her safely to whatever town she thinks fit to name. — Be quick,” he added in a lower tone ; “ for as she has held companionship with the men around, she may

feel it bitter to witness what is in store for them. Away !”

The old officer he spoke to conducted the wife of Griffith and her companions from the hall ; and the count, as soon as they were gone, turned with a frowning brow to the men who had been brought in, saying to one of his own people that stood near, “ They have been fairly chosen by lot from amongst the prisoners ? ”

“ They have, my lord,” replied the man : “ they drew the lots themselves.”

“ Now, then,” continued the count sternly, “ before I doom you to the death you have all deserved, answer me these questions : first, by what authority you wage war here in France in time of truce ? ”

“ By my own,” replied one of the men boldly. “ Come, come, sir : there is not much to be said upon the matter. We have fought you, and you have fought us. You have won the day, and can do with us what you will. Hang us, if you please, but do not keep us standing here talking about it. What signifies it to any one, whether King Edward,

or King John, or king anybody else told me to make war in France, so that wars be made?"

"It signifies to you, my friend," replied the count, "for it makes you a lawful soldier or a lawless plunderer: it renders you an honourable prisoner or a captured robber, and insures your safety, or leads you to a halter."

"Good faith, then," cried the man, "I fancy it must be the halter; for I made war of my own hand, knowing what I was about, and so am quite ready. However, no one can say I have used him ill. I have never butchered a prisoner, or injured a woman, or offered wrong to a lady; and had it been my day to command, all this would not have happened."

"My noble lord," said Albert Denyn, taking a step forward, with his countenance glowing at the task of interfering with his lord's judgment, "when I was a prisoner in these men's hands, and the scoundrel Maillot sought to put me to death, this person raised his voice in my behalf, and aided to save me."

"So, my boy, thou wert a prisoner with them," said the count; "well, then, his life

shall be given for yours. Set him apart, Magnon."

"Not without the rest!" cried the captive. "All fair, my good lord! I drew my lot with them, and their fate I will share, be it what it may.—I thank thee, good youth: thou art a noble lad, and wilt be a good soldier; but I won't part company with my friends here, though it be at the gallows-foot."

"Thou art a good fellow thyself," exclaimed the captal. "I pray you, count, spare these men,—I vowed I would have vengeance for any wrong done to the lady, and the man who it seems was the chief offender has met with punishment, as you know. Speak, dear lady, did you receive any injury?"

"None!" replied Adela eagerly. "They treated me, my dear father, with all kindness and courtesy, till the castle was attacked, and that fearful man came and dragged me to the battlements. Spare them—Oh! I entreat you, my father, put them not to death!—Consider how cruelly they might have used me had they been so disposed."

“Nay, nay, my lord,” said the captal, “let us show mercy to those that remain. Some seventy have been slain, it seems; and as I know that it is your wish to free Touraine from these plunderers, keep them in prison, or let those who will take service in my band; for I am bound upon a long journey in arms, and need tried men.—Come, my dear lord—for my share in this day’s fight you shall give me the guerdon of the prisoners’ lives.”

“I give them to you willingly, lord captal,” cried the count, turning and grasping his hand, “not as your guerdon for such high deeds as you have done this day, but out of love and friendship for so noble a knight. For your aid I have a better recompence.—Let the hall be cleared!—Stay, Albert—stay, Chassain—and you, too, Delbas—let the rest leave us.”

The cheek of Adela grew as pale as death with a presentiment of the coming of a painful moment. Albert Denyn, with a quivering lip, fixed his eyes upon the ground, scarcely daring to raise them, while the receding feet of the soldiery told that the hall was not yet clear.



When all was becoming more still, however, he gave a momentary glance at the face of the capital. It, too, was pale; and as he laid aside his casque, and pressed his hand upon his brow, Albert thought he saw tokens of strong emotion on that noble countenance.

“My dear and gallant friend,” said the count, turning to the knight as soon as the hall was clear, “to you, and to your courage alone, do I owe the safety of my beloved child, without the loss of my own honour and renown, by basely yielding to the demands of these lawless men. What reward can I offer you? what, in other words, can I refuse you after this?—Forget, my lord capital, all that passed two mornings ago, except that you asked my daughter’s hand: and believe that I then gave it to you. Take it, my lord, for I know no man in France so well calculated to defend, protect, and insure her honour. Take her, my lord, for I am sure that you will make her happy.”

Adela’s countenance was as pale as death, and her knees shook beneath her. Albert Denyn remained with his teeth hard set, his



eyes fixed upon the pavement, and his hand so tightly clenched upon the count's sword, which he had raised from the ground and still held, that the fingers sank into the velvet with which the hilt was covered. The Captal de Buch, on his part, looked grave, and even sad, though he stood beside the count with his lofty person raised to its full height, and his brow calm, though somewhat stern. For a moment he kept silence, bending his look upon Adela, and seeming to strive for an insight into the feelings of her heart at that moment. He remained without making any reply so long, that the count turned towards him with some surprise; and the captal, as if satisfied in regard to the subject of his contemplation, took his eyes from the countenance of poor Adela de Mauvinet, and raised them for an instant towards heaven.

“ Pardon, my lord count,” he said, “ that I have not yet thanked you for your generous kindness as I ought. Now let me thank you most truly, most sincerely: you know that the precious gift you offer me can be esteemed by

no man living more than myself. You know how ardently I coveted it—how earnestly I asked it—how bitter was my disappointment when you showed me that I ought not to expect it; that as an English subject, and long an enemy in arms against France, I ought not to aspire to the hand of a French lady, whatever other claims I might have. I have felt the disappointment most bitterly—I feel it still; I still love this lady truly and well; I know that none other will ever hold my heart as she does. But, my lord, I cannot take advantage of your generous offer; and what you refused me on just and noble grounds, I cannot now accept, simply because I have done my mere duty, and fulfilled my oath as a knight.”

The count gazed in his face for a moment with a look both of inquiry and surprise, and then replied, abruptly, “Captal, there is some other motive! Can it be that you are offended at my first reply?”

“Oh no, upon my life,” exclaimed the captal: “you gave the noblest and the best of reasons for your conduct, and I should be

weak indeed, my friend, if I did not feel that you are right."

"Still, captal," exclaimed the count, "still I see there is some other motive: I adjure you, on your honour, tell me, is there not?"

The captal turned his eyes from the death-like countenance of Adela, to the sad but resolute countenance of Albert Denyn, and then replied, "Thus adjured, my lord, I must acknowledge that there is."

"Then I beseech you, in friendship and in honour, name it," exclaimed the count.

The captal hesitated for an instant, but the moment after answered in a freer tone than he had yet used, though with a somewhat melancholy smile, "I will not refuse to tell you my motive, my good lord," he said, "although it go somewhat against my own vanity to speak it. The cause is this, my lord — that with all the attention, and care, and such means as gentlemen employ to win fair ladies' hearts, I have not succeeded in gaining that of this dear lady here. I had hoped that it might be otherwise; but from what I have this day seen

—nay this very moment, I am convinced, even against all the whisperings of pride and vanity, that my suit is not successful with her whose happiness I am bound to prize even more than my own.”

“Nay, nay,” exclaimed the count, “you are mistaken, my good lord: Adela turned somewhat pale, it is true; but think what she has gone through this day!—Besides, so young a creature hears not such things without emotion.—Speak, Adela, speak thyself; and if, as is the way with woman, you will not say that you can love, tell the noble capital, at least, that it was but a passing beating of thy heart that took the colour from thy face just now.”

“I dare not, my dear father,” replied the lady, in tones scarcely audible, “I dare not. Far be it from me to resist your will, or to oppose your wishes even by a word; but still when you ask me, I must speak the truth. The capital has read my feelings right. As the dearest, the noblest, the best of friends, I shall always regard him, but I cannot love him as he deserves to be loved.”

“Such love will come, such love will come,” exclaimed the count.

“Nay, nay, my good lord,” said the captal, “my pride now takes arms : I must be loved entirely by my wife—and henceforth I withdraw my suit. Pardon me, lady, if I have given you pain; and let me still assure you, that if ever the time should come, which God forbid, when you should want protection from another arm than that of your noble father, no knight in Europe will so willingly draw the sword in your defence, as he who has done so this day. To-morrow, God willing, he will leave the castle of Mauvinet, and try in other lands to forget—not that he has seen you—not that he has loved—but that he has ever loved you too well for his own happiness. Do you forget it likewise, for the few short hours that he has yet to stay. Look on him only as a valued friend who is soon to quit you, and so let the time pass as gaily as it may.”

The Count de Mauvinet turned and grasped the captal's hand with a look in which there was some sorrow mixed strangely with other

feelings. To unite his daughter with the capital, or, indeed, with any one who could ever become an enemy to France, was in itself painful to him, however much he might love and esteem the person; and though, in his gratitude for the rescue of his daughter, he had offered, and really wished, to give that which, in his eyes, was the best gift that man could bestow or could receive, there was a sensation of relief mingled with a certain sort of disappointment, which rendered his feelings somewhat strange and contradictory.

“Then, my lord,” he said, “as you refuse the gift I offer you, what recompence can I make you? for some token of gratitude you must accept. To you, and you alone, I owe the safety of my beloved child: that deed must not go without its guerdon.”

“Nay, count,” replied the capital, “you mistake: it is not to me you owe the lady’s safety. Though I have had some share, others have had a greater; and, indeed, to this good youth here, Albert Denyn, are you truly indebted for the deliverance of your daughter,

without that compromise of your own honour, which you would have felt and regretted for many a long day, if you had yielded to the unjust demands of these base men. To him, I say, more than to any other, is the safety of the Lady Adela owing."

"Oh yes," exclaimed Adela, eagerly, but with a countenance into which the blood came quickly while she spoke. "He would have freed me long before, too, had it not been for my own weak fears in regard to crossing the moat, over which he offered to carry me."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the count: "I do not understand this, capital! I saw you with my own eyes——"

"True, my lord," replied the capital; "but who was it led me by the path which enabled me to free the lady? But my part of the tale is soon told—Albert himself must relate to you the rest. While lying out in the fields this morning with my men, two of them suddenly came upon some one, whom they seized, thinking him one of the companions from the castle, and brought him to me. His joy at finding



me I shall not easily forget. He pressed me eagerly to go at once to the deliverance of the Lady Adela, assuring me that he could guide me by a way which would put the castle in my power without delay. From the numbers, however, that I found were within the place, I judged that we might risk the safety of the Lady Adela herself, if we ventured to attack the castle without your aid. Resolved, however, to have the honour of the enterprise as far as possible, I kept to myself the knowledge I had gained, sent on Albert with some of my men to wait till the whole forces of Mauvinet could come up; and then left you, as you know, to assail another side of the castle. Albert led us, without mistake, to the spot, where a small postern gate opened upon the moat; and he was the first to plunge into the water, under the arrows of those who were upon the walls. We followed, one by one, and through dark and difficult passages he guided us with certainty to a chamber which had lately been tenanted by the Lady Adela. She was no longer in it,



however, having been dragged by that villain Maillot to the walls; but we found a poor woman there in her place, who first, by her cries, alarmed some of the adventurers, but afterwards did us good service, by telling us where we should find the lady, and leading us partly on the way. We were soon obliged to betake us to our arms; for the woman's cries had brought men into the corridor, and thence we had to fight our way through, till we reached the gallery above the gates. What happened then, my lord, you know: at least, as I saw you all gazing up while the wolf continued to struggle in my grasp, I doubt not that you did see all that passed. What more remains to be said, my noble lord, is, merely, that, from the first, Albert led us well and truly; and also, when the strife came, he fought as gallantly as any man-at-arms I ever saw. So much so, in truth, and so well had he deserved, that, for a moment, I thought to leave him the whole adventure, and suffer him to deal with Maillot himself. Had the lady not been in danger, I would have done so;

for I hold it to be the part of a man of honour to suffer every one to accomplish an enterprise he has well begun. The lady was in peril, however, and I durst not do the good youth that justice. To say truth, I am glad now I did not; for the scoundrel was strong and valiant, and even gave me some trouble; and his well-knit limbs and long experience were too much for a youth, however brave. My tale is told, my lord—Albert and the lady herself have more to say; for by some means he found his way to the chamber where they had placed her, before making his escape, and offered even then, with every likelihood of success, to set her free himself.”

The count held out his hand to Albert Denyn, saying, “How then shall I reward *you*, Albert? You lay up against me every day some heavy debt for gratitude to pay.”

“Oh no,” my lord, replied Albert Denyn, “it is not so, indeed. I feel most deeply that all I can do is but little to show my thankfulness for all that you have done for me. Do I not

owe you every thing, my lord? From a period of infancy that I can no more recollect, have you not been all in all to me—more a father than a lord; a friend and not a master?”

“And well have you repaid me ever,” replied the Lord of Mauvinet, “and daily do you repay me more and more for all that I have done; but for such services as this, any little kindness and favour that I may have shown you is little, and I must find some other means of recompensing the deliverance of my beloved child. You shall ask me some boon yourself when you have had time for thought; and I believe that it will be difficult for you to claim anything which I should be tempted to refuse.”

As the count spoke, the Captal de Buch turned his keen glance towards Adela, whose countenance, when first his eyes rested on her, was pale with various emotions; but the moment her look met his, her face became flushed like the morning sky, and her eyes, which had been for some time turned to the face of her father, sought the ground, and were not raised again.

The capital mused for a moment with a brow slightly clouded; but the moment after he smiled again, saying, "You have a long tale to hear, my lord. The Lady Adela, too, may well be faint and weary: let us prepare a litter for her as best we may, and all return to Mauvinet ere the day goes down. The sun has already passed the hour of noon, though we were here at the dawning. Albert's history will cheer us over the fire to-night; and I will gladly spend the last day of my stay in Touraine within the hospitable walls where I have known no slight happiness."

"Be it so, my good lord, be it so," replied the count: "but let us seek some refreshment first; we are sure to find plenty of good wine and stores of all kinds in a free companion's castle. In the meanwhile, some of the men shall prepare the litter; and I will take such order here as to prevent this place ever becoming again a scourge to the country round."

An hour of active employment succeeded, although, a conveyance for Adela having been

found in the stables of the castle, less time would have sufficed for mere preparation. But the men of Mauvinet, although they had undertaken all the labour and peril of the expedition with willing hearts, in order to deliver their lord's daughter, and revenge the insult offered to himself, were well disposed to seek some compensation for all the fatigue and danger they had undergone in the stores of the adventurers; and it was consequently with some trouble and delay that they were gathered together to depart. The Lord of Mauvinet too took means to execute his purpose in regard to dismantling the castle; and just as he and the captal were mounting their horses to ride away, the last touch was put to their triumph by the fall of a large part of the castle wall into the moat.

## CHAP. II.

THOSE were strange times to live in; and although human nature is ever the same, yet the aspect which she assumes is very different at different periods. In the present day, when order and law, established throughout all civilised lands, give security to life and property, when violence and wrong are amongst those rare occurrences which excite the wonder of the countries where they take place, it is difficult to conceive how lightly were borne, even by those who suffered from them, deeds which now would set a whole world on fire, and spread terror and consternation through all hearts, — how soon after the pressure of affliction and terror the mind recovered its elasticity, and gaiety and joy succeeded to sadness, to anger, or to apprehension.

Thus any who had beheld the scenes, such

as we have described them, which took place in the morning, during the attack upon the stronghold of the adventurers, might have been much surprised to behold the picture presented by the castle of Mauvinet on the evening of the same day. Mirth and joy reigned in the halls, and feasting and revelry presented themselves on all sides.

The retainers who had been gathered together for the delivery of the Lady Adela were now all regaled by the hospitality of her father; and though the sun was setting when the train, after a long and fatiguing march, once more came within sight of Mauvinet, yet before nine o'clock on the same night a supper had been prepared, which all those who partook of it declared to be excellent. Such was the continual state of preparation for profuse hospitality in which a feudal lord of those days was bound to hold himself, and such, we may also say, were the simple tastes and good digestion of our ancestors of the fourteenth century.

It was, of course, impossible that the whole



of the men who had followed the Lord of Mauvinet back to his dwelling could be entertained in one chamber. Though many had returned to their homes, and a considerable body had been left in the hold of the adventurers, nearly two hundred were feasted in various rooms on the ground floor of the castle, while about half that number revelled in what was called the knights' hall. It was common in those days for all ranks to be mingled at one table on such occasions; but in the present case, the numbers gave an excuse for a different and more convenient course. Beyond the knights' hall was a smaller one, where a table was spread for the count, the captal, and some twenty of the most distinguished guests; and at that table appeared, sitting by her father's side, Adela herself, pale, indeed, and bearing many marks of past agitation and alarm, but yet far more calm and tranquil than any one could have been whose thoughts had not been like hers — familiar, all her life, with battles, dangers, and disasters.

Ere she seated herself at her father's board,



she had performed a task which her own heart, not less than the customs of the times, imposed upon her; and with grace, which mingled timidity and self-possession, she went round from room to room, spoke with most of those who were present, and offered, in few but heart-felt words, her thanks for the deliverance to which all had more or less contributed.

At the same table with the count was also seated Albert Denyn, who, in truth, had proposed to himself to take a much more humble situation in one of the other chambers; but the count had called him to his side, bidding him seat himself in a place which had been reserved for him, and the youth, without hesitation, obeyed, as he would any other order of his lord.

The captal looked down while the command was given, and asked himself, in a low tone, as Albert took his seat, "What will be the end, I wonder?" A slight frown contracted his countenance too, as he thus thought; and, to say truth, there was some bitterness in the feelings of his bosom at that moment. But his heart was naturally too generous and kind to suffer such

sensations to hold it long; and the instant after he added, "Well, let honour and great deeds still have their due," and he looked up with his face bright and clear again.

Not long after the meal had begun, the count drank to the captal, and sent round to him, by the hands of his son — who served him with wine at the table, as was customary in those times—the large golden cup called the *hanap*. The captal drank some of the wine, and then, turning towards Albert Denyn, said, "To the best doer in this day's fight! — It is not always, young man, that fortune shows such favour as she has done to you this day. She has given you opportunities such as many men long for in vain during a whole lifetime, and, to do you but justice, you have shown that you deserved them.—Take him round the cup, good youth."

The young lord carried him the cup; and Albert Denyn took it with a glowing cheek, bowing his head towards the captal, but scarcely touching the gold with his lip ere he returned it. The eyes of all men were upon him at

that moment ; but had they been turned towards Adela, they might have perceived that hers were filled with glistening moisture. The poor girl would fain have restrained the bright drop altogether, but she could do no more than prevent its passing from her eyelids.

The tone of her mind was much changed from what it had been in the morning. Great occasions excite great energies ; but after the dangers, and strifes, and anxieties have passed away, there comes a softness over the heart, a faint tranquillity, like the drowsiness succeeding long toil, when the vigour is relaxed, and tender things affect us more than all the harder and the harsher matters gone before. It was one of those moments with Adela, when she longed to have no eyes upon her, but to sit in the solitude of her own chamber, and let the tears flow as they would.

The tears, however, which came against her will to the very brink of the fountain, were not unhappy ones : a load had been taken off her mind by more than one event which had occurred in the morning. She had no longer to

fear the suit of the captal; she had no longer to apprehend that she would be obliged either to excite her father's anger, by disobedience and opposition to his will, or doom herself to the long and agonising torture of marriage without love. She had obtained what she could scarcely have hoped to obtain — the opportunity of speaking openly a part at least of the feelings of her heart. Nor had her father expressed the least anger at the conduct she had pursued. He had sought her in her chamber, to bring her to the hall, and Adela had felt some apprehension when she saw him appear; but his countenance wore the same look of affection that it had ever borne towards her, and the captal's name was never mentioned. Thus on all those points she was fully satisfied, and her heart at rest. The immediate danger was gone, and the apprehensions which had weighed her heart down for some days had passed away, like one of those heavy clouds that are borne afar by the wind at the moment they seem about to burst upon our heads. This was quite sufficient for Adela; indeed, few women require more, under similar circum-

stances. She sought not to investigate deeply her own feelings; she would not ask herself what they were, or whither they would lead her; she was afraid, and unwilling, to inquire into the future; and, happy in the present, she sat, and only feared that the bright dream which surrounded her might vanish but too soon.

Such, however, was not the state of mind of Albert Denyn: he had been agitated by manifold feelings during the whole day, in the fight, on his way back, and after his return; and seldom, indeed, in the breast of any one, have more contending emotions struggled at one time, or succeeded each other so rapidly. Terror and agitation on account of Adela had begun the morning; then came joy for her deliverance, almost hand in hand with all the fierce and angry passions excited in the struggle with the adventurers; a moment after, the delight of seeing her safe was mingled with grief and apprehension, when her father offered her hand to the Captal de Buch; and such sensations gave way to a feeling of relief and gra-

titude, when the words of the capital removed that source of anxiety for ever.

On his return home, he had hastened to a chamber where he could be alone; and, in thanking God for all the successes of the day, he had mingled tears with the words of gratitude. But he, unlike Adela, was not satisfied with the present — he asked himself what the future was to be. Unlike her, he inquired of his own heart to what the feelings, which were so busy in his bosom, were ultimately to lead, and the momentary light which had streamed over the prospect passed away as his eyes gazed upon it firmly.

There was nothing but misery before him. Though the sorrow was delayed, yet it was no less certain. Though the hand of Adela was not yet given, it was equally sure to be bestowed on some one ere long — on some one, perhaps, less worthy, than the noble and generous man who had now renounced it. For him there was no expectation, for him the prospect of the coming years was all darkness; and the speedy separation which was to take place between them did

not even leave him the only mitigation which the hopelessness of his condition might have received — the delight of passing the intervening hours with her, till the bitter moment arrived which was to part them for ever.

As he thus thought — and it must always be remembered that Albert Denyn never thought, but with the purposes of right — he asked himself what consolation it would be, or rather what advantage could arise, from his remaining where he was, even were it possible : to what could it bring him, he inquired : what could be the result, either to himself or to Adela.

He felt, he knew that he was loved : it might be some temporary satisfaction to her as well as him, were he to remain ; but what would be the end ? what could be the ultimate consequence ? what, but more misery to her and to himself ? Could he — he asked himself — could he assure his own heart, that the time would never come, when, in some unforeseen moment, when, in some hour of strong temptation, his love might be spoken to Adela, and hers to him ; when words might be said, which he had no right to



say; when feelings might find voice, which he had no right to entertain; and when he might violate the confidence reposed in him, and have to reproach himself for ever with having voluntarily, by his own rash act, contributed to confirm a passion, which he was bound by every principle of honour to combat? He felt that it was but too likely that such a thing might happen, that such a moment might come: he acknowledged that both for Adela and himself it would be better that he were afar.

When once he saw what was the clear way of duty, Albert bent all the energies of his mind to follow it without hesitation; and instead of regretting the near approach of the time, when his departure was to take place, he thanked God that it was so, and looked forward to the moment with satisfaction.

“It is better,” he said to himself, “it is far better that it should be so: despair is my only portion through life; but she cannot love me as well as I love her — that is impossible — and there is no reason why she should not be happy. She may forget me when I am gone — I can



never forget her; but my love for her must teach me to think of her happiness more than my own. I will love her as she deserves to be loved, nobly."

Still, though such were his resolutions, they were not the less painful, and it had been with feelings of deep gloom that he descended to the hall. The honour that was there done him in no degree diminished that gloom: it was gratifying, indeed, to hear such praises, though he thought them more than he deserved, and it was pleasant, too, that Adela should hear them, for he knew that they would be echoed from her own heart; but still they gave him no hope: for he was well aware that — except in cases where poverty was the portion of the noble, and great wealth that of the inferior rank — the union of a lady of high degree with any one less than noble had never been heard of in the land.

"Such a vision would be vain indeed," he thought, "and is not for me to indulge. My path is clear, my duty unquestionable, and it I will perform, let it cost me what it may."

He was sooner tried than he expected. The

evening passed away at length; and Albert cast himself down to seek some troubled sleep; but it came not for many hours; and when it did come, it was full of restless and confused visions, till within a few hours of the dawn. Then, indeed, he slept, and was still deep in slumber, when some one woke him, and called him to the chamber of the Captal de Buch. Albert rose and dressed himself hastily, somewhat ashamed to see the morning so far advanced.

The captal, when the young man at length reached his chamber, appeared to have been long up. He was seated at a table reading, with a countenance grave, and somewhat sad — it might, indeed, be called stern; for in his bosom there were feelings which he struggled to restrain, and he felt as if he were in combat with an enemy, so that his brow bore upon it strong signs of the contest in which he was engaged.

“You sleep late, young man,” he said, when Albert entered.

“It is not my habit, my lord,” replied Albert; “but I was much fatigued last night, too much, indeed, to sleep, till it was time to rise.”

The captal looked down for several moments in silence. "I sent for you," he said at length, "because, as you know, it is my purpose to go hence this day. Since first you entered into my band, as it seemed at the time gladly, you have had means of serving your own lord so well, that circumstances are greatly changed ; and perhaps it may please you more to remain here, now that an honourable station is before you, than to accompany me to a distant land. Should it be so, I set you free : nay more, I will do what I can to advance you."

"A thousand thanks, my noble lord," replied Albert Denyn ; "but you much mistake me, if you think that aught can alter my purpose, of seeking honour and renown in arms. I know nowhere where I can so well find it as in your steps ; and unless I have done something to offend, I beseech you let me follow you, as you once promised me."

"Is such, indeed, your wish ?" demanded the captal, with a look still incredulous. "Mark me, youth : fear not to displease either me or your good Lord of Mauvinet. If you desire rather

to stay than go, I will so speak unto that noble gentleman, that the proposal shall come from him, and not from you, and doubtless he will promote your fortunes here."

"I see, my lord, I must have offended," replied Albert; "but, believe me, it has been unwittingly."

"No, on my honour," replied the captal with a smile, "I have taken no offence. I thought but to please thee, youth. However, if thou wilt go, now is the time to say so."

"Undoubtedly, my lord," replied Albert: "my choice has never been shaken. If you permit it, I will go with you, and am ready this very hour."

"So be it then," replied the captal, "and perchance it may go better with thee, than if thou hadst staid behind."

"I doubt it not, my lord," replied Albert: "though it may give me some pain to part with many an old friend, and many a scene, where I have spent happy hours; yet I am sure that in going I do what is right, and will therefore cast behind me all regrets."

“So shall you ever do well,” replied the captal. “At three this afternoon we will begin our march, and enter Mons by moonlight. You have arms, I know: here is a purse of gold for thee, good youth — you may find it needful on the road.”

“I would fain win it first,” replied Albert, drawing back. “My Lord of Mauvinet has supplied me plentifully; and wealth and renown are both sweetest when first earned. I have a noble horse, too, my good lord; so that I need nothing but your and fortune’s favour, good opportunity, and a somewhat lighter heart.”

“Fie, lad!” replied the captal, with a faint smile: “you would not have a lighter heart than your lord’s?—and yet you have good cause,” he added; “but it matters not: get you gone, and be ready when my trumpets sound. You shall win honour and renown, which, after all, is better than all else on earth — ay, youth, even than a lady’s favour! So now away; make the most of your minutes; bid adieu to your friends, and give as little time to thought as may be; for

thought loads the heart, and does but little good, when resolutions are once taken."

Albert withdrew, for the captal bent down his eyes upon his book again, as a signal for him to withdraw; but as Albert passed through the doorway, he saw the gallant soldier raise his look towards the sky, and had he been near, might have heard him say, "This is very strange!"

Every one must have felt and acknowledged, at some period of life, that there are few things bitterer on earth than to part with those we love; but that bitterness is a thousand-fold increased, when no tear must stain the eyelid, when no sigh must pass the lip, when we must speak hopeful words of future meetings, and seem to break easily the ties that tear our hearts to sever. Then, indeed, the pain is terrible — then, indeed, the grief is deep. There were few pangs wanting in the breast of Albert Denyn when the trumpets of the captal sounded to horse, and the whole party assembled in the court-yard of the castle, to see the gallant train depart. The youth had not ventured within

the halls, but stood with the rest of the retainers, till the captal himself, with the Lord of Mauvinet, came forth into the court. Adela accompanied them, leaning on her father's arm; and as the great leader stood beside his horse, she forced herself to speak words of courtesy and of form to the departing nobleman, although her heart was full of tears, and her cheek was as pale as death. She looked towards Albert Denyn, but durst not speak to him, till at length her father called him by name, and the youth came near.

“Adieu, Albert,” said the Lord of Mauvinet. “You go to win honour and renown — I may say indeed that you have already won it, but glory may still be added to each day. Fare you well, my boy; I part from you, as from a son, with regret, but with hope and expectation. Do ever such deeds as you have lately done, and you will rise to high fortunes, and win an immortal name. Give me your hand, Albert: I owe you more than I owe any other man on earth. The time of repayment will sooner or later come, and you shall ever find me both ready and willing to



acknowledge the debt, and to acquit it." Albert pressed his lips upon his lord's hand, and the count, yielding to the feelings of his heart, took him in his arms, and held him kindly to his bosom.

"Thank him, Adela," added the Lord of Mauvinet, after a moment's silence: "in your behalf have his first deeds been done: give him your cheek, girl, and bid him win high renown for your love."

The Lord of Mauvinet spoke in jest, though, in the very jest itself, there might be deeper thoughts than there seemed; but he little knew what were the sensations he excited in the hearts of Adela and Albert Denyn. She trembled in every limb as the youth approached her; but Albert, with a calm and steady step, though with feelings as intense as her own, advanced and took her hand, and then, according to her father's words, pressed his lips upon her cheek.

"The first," murmured he, as he did so, in a voice inaudible to any other ear but her own; "the first, perchance the last."



Even as he spoke, he bent his knee to the ground, and taking her hand in his, imprinted a kiss there also; then springing up with wild eagerness, he turned towards his horse, bowing low to the count as he passed, and put his foot into the stirrup. The captal waved his hand to the trumpeter of his troop, a loud blast echoed upon the air, and in a moment the whole troop was in motion, and winding out through the gates of the castle.

The last who departed was the captal; and as he disappeared beneath the portal of the barbican, the count turned round, startled by a sound of quick feet behind him, when, to his surprise and alarm, he beheld his daughter, supported by some of her women, with her eyes closed, and the ashy hue of death upon her cheek.

## CHAP. III.

A LOUD shout of laughter was the first thing that roused Albert Denyn from a state of mind for which it is difficult to find a name. It was not a reverie, for thought seemed quite extinguished, and recollection to have left him so long as it lasted. It was as if all had gone out, even the active consciousness that he had parted, perhaps, for ever, from her he loved best. All appeared to be swallowed up in one painful sensation, vague, sad, ill-defined, but not the less terrible, because the dark certainty seemed to have neither shape nor feature.

The first thing that roused him, I have said, was a gay laugh; and looking round, he found that he himself was the object of the mirth that met his ear. He might perhaps have been angry had he not been so sad; but

the bitterness of his heart left no room for other sensations, and he fell into his reverie again, though somewhat less profoundly than before. Had he been angry, his anger would but have raised more laughter. As it was, however, the calm sad look which he turned upon his merry companions had some effect even upon them; though they were men, for the most part, who had seen so many scenes of strife and desolation, that their hearts had become, as it were, hardened in the furnace of war, and they had little capability of feeling any of the softer affections of human nature.

“There, let him alone, let him alone,” said one of the old soldiers: “he is a moody youth: did you not see how he kept apart from us all in the castle?”

“Pride as well as melancholy, perhaps,” said another.

“No, no,” replied a younger man: “old Henry the henchman told me that he used to be as gay as a lark; but had fallen gloomy lately.”

“In love, for a thousand *muttons*\*,” said another youth.

“Love!” exclaimed the old soldier again — “you young fools are always thinking of love. I will bet you, Tom Wilson, that if your mother’s cat were sick of a quinsy, you would vow it was love.”

“All envy, old Raymond,” replied the youth, in a gay tone: “you know very little of what love is, seeing that you find few enough to fall in love with you. You want experience, man, you want experience! Now will I bet you a crown that the youth is in love, and I will ask him, too, ere the day be over.”

“He will give thee a buffet, I warrant,” answered the elder man, “and so will I, if thou holdest not thy prate. But what is this our lord is speaking to? by Heaven, he seems to have got hold of a tame bear! Halt there! Halt! The word is given to halt! Now I would give a gold chain to ride on and hear the bear speak, and the captal answer him.”

“Why, our moody comrade seems resolved

\* A gold coin of that day.

to do so," said another. "See ! he sets spurs to his horse, and is up at the captal's side in a minute. By my life he is somewhat bold."

"Do as good service as he did yesterday," replied another, "and be as bold, if you will."

It was, in truth, as the man had said ; for Albert Denyn had galloped forward, suddenly, to the side of the captal, on seeing him pause and speak to an uncouth-looking being clad in goat-skins, who thrust himself right in the way of the leader's horse. The captal's followers were naturally surprised at what seemed an act of great presumption ; but such will not be the case with the reader, who must have perceived that the youth recognised at once, in the personage who stopped the captal, his companion in the prison of the adventurers, to whom, indeed, he owed so much.

The captal was speaking with the old man, as we have said, when the youth came up, and continued his conversation without observing him, saying, —

"By my faith, I will go on ! They shall not turn me from my way."

“As thou wilt,” replied the other, “as thou wilt, knight; nevertheless I have told thee truth, and that thou wilt find right soon.”

“How many, say you?” demanded the captal.

“Full five hundred,” replied the old man; “well armed, prepared, and eager.”

“That is too great an odds, indeed,” said the Captal de Buch, after thinking for a moment; “but how can I make sure of this? You are a stranger to me, old man: it may be a falsehood, or a folly. How shall I know the truth?”

“You may rely in all confidence, my lord,” exclaimed Albert: “this is the man I mentioned to you, who, in fact, set me free when I was a prisoner in the hands of the adventurers. I would trust him, my lord, on my life.”

“Ay,” replied Walleran, “thou art young, and in the age of confidence. Your leader has learnt better in a harder school than thou hast ever known. Past thirty years, man can trust no longer: the first thing that youth loses is its faith in human truth.”

“Nay,” exclaimed the captal, “nay, thou shalt not say so of me. I will trust thee, too, old man : I have no right so to complain of man. Though I have seen much *déceit*, I have felt it little, and therefore cannot claim so sad a right to doubt. I will trust thee. Where say you that they lie in wait?”

“On the straight road between this and Mans : come but to the top of yon high hill, and you may see them, or at least a part.”

“We must not show ourselves,” replied the captal ; “we will leave the troop here, but I will go with you : not that I doubt your word, but that I may count our adventurous friends with my own eyes. It must never be said the *Captal de Buch* turned back before a force less than six times his numbers.”

“Be thy reputation as mad as it will,” replied the old man, “here shall you find enough to satisfy it ; for there are not only six, but twelve times your number. But come you, too, good youth,” he added, “for I have something to claim from this great man, and may need some intercession.”



The captal smiled. "Come," he said, "Albert, come, I too may need you. You know the country well, I think. — Halt there," he continued, speaking to those who followed; and then riding slowly on, he proceeded up the hill, conversing with the old man and Albert Denyn. The latter soon found that Walleran Urgel had brought tidings of a large band of the adventurers — in number, it seemed, some five hundred — having posted themselves upon the road to Mans, as if seeking to intercept the captal on his way. His proposed journey had been made no secret; the part he had taken against the free companions had been conspicuous, the money he bore with him was necessarily considerable, and both revenge and avarice might well induce the adventurers to lay an ambush in his way. From time to time, as he rode forward, the captal turned his eyes upon Albert Denyn, as if seeking to read his young companion's feelings on this new danger. He could gather little, however, from the youth's countenance, which was quite calm; and when he had reached the summit of the hill, he demanded, —



“ Well, Albert, what think you ? should we turn back to Mauvinet ? ”

“ Nay, my lord,” said Albert Denyn, “ I am unfit to give advice ; but to turn back, methinks, would ill become one of the most renowned soldiers in the land.”

The captal only answered by a smile, and, in a moment or two after, they reached a spot whence they could descry, at the distance of about a couple of miles, a considerable body of men gathered together in a hollow way.

The captal gazed forth in silence for a moment or two, and then, speaking to himself, he said, “ About two hundred.”

“ There are more beyond,” said the old man.

“ I see them,” answered the captal, calmly ; “ but as nothing more than their spear heads appear, we cannot count them, my good friend. Doubtless, however, their numbers are what you say ; and as these free companions under Griffith are soldiers not to be despised, it would be something very like madness to at-

tack five hundred, with somewhat under fifty men."

"Methinks it were," replied the old man, in his usual sarcastic tone; "but as no one can tell to what length knightly folly will sometimes lead, it is only for you to decide, most noble captal, whether your high renown requires of you to fall into certain captivity or death, rather than turn back upon your way."

"My lord," said Albert, seeing the captal pause, "I know not why you should either attack these men or return to Mauvinet. There is a road, scarce a mile round, which leads as well to where you seek to go as that which these men have thus occupied. I can guide you by it well, for I have known every step thereof from my youth. On the whole ride, from this spot till within two miles of Mans, you come not within sight of that valley."

"Such must be the road we take then," replied the captal; "for back I go not, let what will come of it. Now let us see your skill, good youth, as guide to a retreating force. And you, old man, what shall we do

with you, or for you? Have you no boon to ask for this good intelligence that you have brought us?"

"Yes," answered the old man, "I have; it is, that you take me with you on your way: this part of the land is no longer safe for me, and I seek not to remain in it. Though I value not life, yet there is one act I would fain see performed, before I go on the long journey, from which one can never return to witness what passes on this earth."

"I know not well how that may be," replied the captal, gazing over the strange figure of the man who addressed him: "your information is worth its price, good friend; but I see not well how the price can be so large a one. We are going far; when we return, Heaven knows! and I seek not fresh companions on my expedition."

"You would say," replied the old man, "that your eye takes offence at these goat-skins—is it not so? That can soon be changed, however. Captal de Buch, I have done you a service: you are held honest and honourable,

as the world goes: I ask you but one boon, and will take no other; give it or refuse it, as you think fit, and as you judge your name requires. A few short minutes would have brought you into the ambush of these men — through me you have found safety — will you take me with you?"

"I do beseech you, my lord," said Albert Denyn — "this man did so much to befriend me, when I stood in need of help, and he so much aided in our yesterday's success, that I beseech you refuse him not. I have enough to purchase him a horse, wherever we shall halt, and till then there are several in the rear."

"I will not refuse him," replied the captal, "though, to speak truth, what he has said is true — I covet not much his goat-skins in my train."

"They shall soon be changed," exclaimed the old man; "for I well know, that those who would willingly see a fool follow them with his cap and bells would shun a wise man in a goat-skin."

“That is very true,” replied the captal, laughing, “and yet they themselves no block-heads either, my good friend. There are too many fools wherever we may go in this good world, for us to be welcomed kindly for bringing a wise man either in goat-skins or not. However, you shall go with us, as far as you will;—into Prussia, if you like it, to fight against the Pagans.”

“Not so,” the old man replied, “not so. I would fain make my way into Normandy if you bend your steps thither; if not, take me to the Beauvoisis, or as near it as may be.”

“We pass through it,” replied the captal, “but Normandy we shall not touch upon; for there are many there who would fain engage me in other enterprises, which I must not undertake. I turn aside then from Mans, and make my way straight on to Beauvais, where one half of the ransom of this good Lord of Mauvinet is to be paid.”

“Ha!” said the old man, “is it as the price of blood, or the price of liberty, that you noble knights take ransoms? A splendid way

it is, in truth, of gaining money, giving up your own bodies to hard blows, cutting the throats of other people, or depriving them of God's fair light and the liberty of their limbs, till they pay you a certain price for freedom."

"Not so," answered the captal, with a smile. "There is no time to argue with you, my good man: I follow the customs of the day in which I live. I risk my heart's blood in defence of a cause that I think righteous and just, and in the same cause I spend my wealth and employ my followers. It is but right that I should make an enemy repay me and reward my soldiery. But come, let us return—we will find you a horse; so follow us.—Come, Albert, come with me."

Thus saying, he turned and put his horse into a quicker pace. "Who is this old man?" he demanded, as soon as they were at a little distance: "his look and his words are far above his garb."

"I know not, truly, sir," replied the youth, "though he seems to know well who I am, and all about me. I found him contending with

the villain Caillet, in defence of the Lady Adela. He seemed to use his weapons skilfully; but when I came up, he left Caillet to me, as if in contempt. Afterwards, when they thrust him into the prison where they kept me, he conversed with me long; and though what he said was not like that which is uttered by ordinary men, yet it was all good, and wise, and noble—at least, so it seemed to me.”

“I will speak with him farther,” said the captal. “See that he be well treated and gently used. Our soldiery is kind enough at heart, but somewhat rough withal. I leave him in your charge for the present, Albert, till we have passed by these good companions, who are lying in wait for us here. I must keep watch myself, till the danger is gone by; afterwards, I will speak with him more at large.”

The captal and the youth rode onward till they reached the spot where the knight's retainers had been left. Orders were then immediately given to provide a horse for Walleran Urgel; and the captal adding some



directions to the principal soldiers in his band, regarding the cautions to be taken, till they had passed by the spot where danger lay, advanced a little on the road. The old man, in the mean time, had followed slowly down the hill, with his eyes bent upon the ground ; and manifold were the comments of the capital's band upon his person and clothing ; in the course of which, their leader himself was not entirely spared.

“ We shall have a fine menagerie,” said one, “ before we get to the end of our journey : a tame bear and a dumb monkey make a hopeful beginning.”

“ The capital was always fond of wild beasts,” said another ; “ but I thought it was more of lions than of apes.”

“ His tastes seem to have changed,” rejoined the first.

“ And not for the better,” said a third.

While these jests were passing, however, the horse had been brought forward for Walleran Urgel, and he approached calmly and slowly to the side of the animal, which, like most of those



in the capital's train, was full of fire and courage. The animal reared and plunged in the hands of the groom, and the men present laughed in anticipation of the figure which their new uncouth companion would make upon the fiery beast which he was about to mount. But to the surprise of all, when he approached with a calm air and laid his hand upon the bridle, bidding the groom stand back, the charger ceased to plunge, stood still and calm, and the old man at a bound leapt into the saddle, while the animal seemed instantly to obey his will, as if feeling at once that he had met with a master.

The jests died away upon the lips, where they had been indulged somewhat too freely; and the old man would certainly have been treated with more respect on account of his display of horsemanship than all the wisdom of the world would have gained him, but at that moment the capital called him to his side, and added the name of Albert Denyn.

Both rode on at once, and Albert received orders to advance some twenty yards before the rest, and lead the way by the road which he

had promised to show. The capital himself, having thus signified his change of purpose, followed slowly, conversing with the old man, while his troop came at some distance behind, enjoying their usual thoughtless merriment, and little heeding what the next moment might bring forth.

## CHAP. IV.

WE must now turn, for a moment or two, to one whom we have not seen for a long time, but who is nevertheless a principal personage in the history which we have undertaken to recount. Passing over what immediately followed the departure of Caillet from the castle of the adventurers, however, we will follow him on the very same road, which was afterwards taken by the Captal de Buch and Albert Denyn, though luckily for him they did not overtake him thereon.

It was on a dark autumnal night in that part of France known by the name of the Beauvoisis; and a fair part of the land it is—indeed I know no sweeter scenes of what may be called home landscape than are presented from time to time during a summer ride through the neighbourhood of Clermont, Chantilly, &c.; nor were

there less of these in those days than at present, but rather, perhaps, more ; for the features of nature have remained the same — except that forests have been cut down, and free common land changed into cultivated fields — and at that time, not only did the cottage and the church crown each rising bank as at present, but here and there the graceful towers and pinnacles of the feudal castle were seen raising their heads over the forest, or topping the highest hills.

It was night, however, as we have said, and night without a star, so that the features of the scenery could not be at all discerned ; when the tall fine figure of William Caillet moved along through the paths of a forest, not above a few miles from the little town of St. Leu. He seemed to tread those paths familiarly, and indeed it was so ; for amongst the scenes of the Beauvoisis, as the reader has been already told, he had been born and brought up ; — although for the last eight or nine years, since the Lord of Mauvinet had become seneschal of Touraine, he had lived with that nobleman near the banks of the Loire.

He was in paths, then, and amongst scenes that were familiar to him. Every object that he had seen during his day's journey had called up some recollection of his youth; but how changed were all the feelings of his heart, since he had quitted that province, as a youth of sixteen or seventeen years of age! There is, perhaps, not one of the passions which tenant the bosom of man whose effects are more baneful than smothered ambition: it is like a viper in the heart, preying upon all that is good and noble within it, and tearing the breast in which it is confined, in its vain efforts to force its way forth, and find a wider scope.

The serpent, indeed, is of many sorts; but of all ambitions, that which is the most injurious to ourselves and others is the ambition which is founded upon vanity—and such was the passion in the heart of William Caillet. When he had gone forth from the Beauvoisis, though wayward, obstinate, and wild, there had been many a better trait observable in his character, many a nobler feeling existing in his heart. He had not only displayed talents of a high

order, but graces which captivate so as to cause faults to be overlooked when they should be checked ; and the worthy chaplain of the Count of Mauvinet had fancied that he could never do enough to praise and to encourage the exertions of the young serf. Thus a heart naturally disposed to vanity was soon possessed therewith as with a demon ; and on its wings rose up the passion of ambition. He fancied that all ought to be open to him ; all that was done for him seemed too little ; the distinctions made in his favour were in his eyes too small, when compared with his estimate of his own genius and powers ; and he became in the first instance eager to obtain more, and then discontented when his efforts so to do were not successful. Imagination but too often lends her aid to whatever passion of the heart is strongest ; and as he walked in proud superiority amongst his fellows, he would often dream wild and extravagant dreams, even at a time when he was a mere youth, of what he might one day become, and how he would then demean himself. But as experience was added, and years went on, he saw all the mani-

fold difficulties that surrounded him, the innumerable obstacles that presented themselves to his ambition on every side. It was in vain that he looked for any path, however narrow and difficult, by which he might hope to climb the hill of fame, to open a course to glory and renown. None was to be seen; and the ambition which for years had been growing up in his breast, like an eagle bred in a cage, only felt the power of its full-grown wings to beat them against the bars. He asked himself, why should this be? why men, far, far inferior to himself, should possess advantages which to him were denied? Why, by a mere accident of birth, they should have every gift and opportunity of fortune, and he have none? and every sensation that vanity and discontent united can produce now rose up to plague him.

It was long, however, very long, before he could persuade himself that some opportunity would not sooner or later be afforded him for raising himself by strenuous exertion to the height for which he fancied himself formed. Fancy ranged wild amidst every thing that



was possible, while probability was left far behind. The example of Artevelde was unfortunately before his eyes, at a time when his mind was not sufficiently formed to enable him to see the difference between the brewer of Ghent and the French serf; and on that example he built up visions of power and might, which became, as it were, a part of his own mind. Those visions, too, arose at a period when new sensations enter into the human heart, and love claims his share, likewise, ere other passions can swallow up the whole. Dreams of tenderness then became mingled in the breast of Caillet with dreams of ambition—and Adela de Mauvinet, though then in extreme youth, formed part of all.

At first, his feelings of love were pure and high, in some respects not unlike those which we have depicted as existing in the bosom of Albert Denyn. But vanity was mingled with the whole. He had fancied that he would find means to make her proud of his affection; that he would raise himself to such a height, that he could honour her, rather than she honour him.



But as such hopes began to disappear, coarser passions arose in the breast of William Caillet, and mingled themselves even with his love for Adela. He mixed with the peasantry in the neighbourhood, who were somewhat proud to be noticed by a favourite attendant of their lord. His fine person, too, and graceful carriage, were not lost upon the girls of the village or the farm ; but a bad name began to follow him : the doors of many a dwelling were closed against him ; and tales of betrayal, and seduction, and heartless licentiousness, began to spread around.

In general, the injured, believing his favour with the count to be even greater than it really was, were afraid to complain ; but in one instance a father, in despair, flew to the castle, and told his tale at once to the Lord of Mauvinet. The complainant was a man of the poorer class of peasantry, but of good repute, and honourable amongst his fellows ; and the count had no hesitation as to the conduct he should pursue. He promised that the offender should be compelled to make the only repar-

ation in his power, and unite his fate for ever to her whom he had dishonoured. Fortunately for Caillet he was himself absent at the time ; for his was a spirit not to yield tamely to such injunctions as those which the count was determined to lay upon him, and what might have been the result cannot be told.

He was at a distance, however, and the father remained at the castle, waiting for his return, with some anxiety, although, in those days, the command of a feudal lord was not to be disobeyed ; but ere the youth returned, the decree of a more powerful lord had reversed that of the Count de Mauvinet. Despair and shame had driven the peasant's unhappy child to seek refuge in the grave ; and the tidings at once reached William Caillet, that the complaint had been made, the sentence given, and the decree rendered null by the death of his unhappy victim.

The matter was different now : where he might have resisted with obduracy and daring hardihood, had there been a possibility of his obedience being put to the test, it now became

his policy to yield, and feign repentance. He expressed, and, perhaps, indeed, felt much and deep regret at all that had occurred; but he stopped not there: he falsified the truth, and vowed that it had been his intention to do right to the unhappy girl, had not her own rash act prevented it. All the atonement in his power he offered willingly to make, but that atonement soon reduced itself to nothing; for the father, in mourning and indignation, would never see or hear mentioned one whom he looked upon as the betrayer and murderer of his child.

The heart of Caillet, though it had condescended to hypocrisy, burned within him, when he remembered the words of repentance which he had spoken, and the bitter reproofs of the count; and though his lord forgave his offence, and forgot, or nearly forgot, the circumstance altogether, Caillet neither forgave nor forgot. Feelings of anger and malevolence mingled with all his thoughts and sensations. He longed for revenge upon one who had humiliated him; and though in his anger the count had been but

just — while in all his preceding conduct he had been generous, kind, and sparing — yet Caillet only remembered the bitter terms of reprobation and reproach in which his noble master had spoken of his error.

He dreamed still, though the count had placed his real situation clearly before his eyes, and, in determining to wed him to one of the lowliest peasants, had shown him the point of view in which he looked upon him. Still Caillet mingled Adela with his visions, but in a different manner from before. He thought no longer of winning her admiration by high deeds and mighty efforts; he thought not of acquiring power, and honour, and station, that he might obtain her, in despite of all the obstacles of birth; but he thought — or rather dreamed, for it deserved not the name of thought — of gaining, like Artevelde, mighty sway and great dominion, solely as a means of compelling her father humbly to meet his wishes, and, willing or unwilling, to make Adela his bride.

Each day, however, as he lived and became

more perfectly acquainted with the state of the country and the society around him, such phantasms became less frequent and less vivid, though the ambition still existed, and even grew stronger every hour ; while bitter discontent and envious jealousy followed naturally in its train. To such departed dreams succeeded things more dangerous ; schemes and plans, at first vague and fanciful, and little more tangible than the visions that went before. But his was a nature not to wait for opportunities, but to strive to make them ; and other circumstances, which we shall soon mention, by increasing the intensity of all his passions, and adding a fresh one of still more terrible power, made him behold the disasters which befell his native country with joy and satisfaction, looking upon anarchy and strife as the only means by which his ends could be accomplished.

The circumstances to which we have alluded were these :—Some three or four years after he himself had entered into the household of the Count of Mauvinet, Albert Denyn, then scarcely more than a mere child, had appeared in it also.

Caillet had at that time all the best feelings of youth about him ; and though at first he felt some degree of boyish jealousy at the favour of the new-comer, it soon passed away, and they became companions and friends. Even the youthful fondness of Adela and Albert did not seem to pain or strike him ; for although the latter was somewhat older than his lord's daughter, Caillet regarded him merely as a boy ; and a report to which the count's fondness for Albert gave rise, that he was, in fact, a natural son of that nobleman, tended to remove every thing like jealousy. At length, when Albert Denyn was about sixteen or seventeen years of age, he was absent in Paris, and in the Beauvoisis, for nearly a year and a half, part of the time with the prior, and part of the time with the count ; and about the same period also, the Lady of Mauvinet died, leaving but one son, then a somewhat weakly boy. It was shortly after that event, that some one thought fit to jest with the Lord of Mauvinet on his fondness for Albert, alluding to the report which I have mentioned. The count replied with so much indignation, in

Caillet's hearing, that every suspicion of the kind was removed from his mind at once.

It was not, however, till Albert returned, that Caillet himself understood how great a change the conviction that his companion was in no degree allied to the house of Mauvinet had made in his feelings; but when he did come back, changed and improved in every respect, a man instead of a boy, full of eager life, and powerful energies, and withal a self-command, and strong determination in right, which won him respect and esteem from all around, new sensations rose up in Caillet's breast towards his young companion, and he soon learnt to hate him with a mortal antipathy.

It is quite true that in the bosom of virtue there exists, as it were, a touchstone for vice, and that touchstone acted powerfully in the breast of Adela, for from a very early period she conceived a dislike towards Caillet, which nothing could ever remove; and it must also be said, that by some acts of insolent presumption he contrived to render her aversion more marked and painful to himself. But in the heart of



Albert Denyn, the test did not produce the same effect, at least so soon. He had been Caillet's companion for many years ; and when he returned, it was long before he found that there was no longer between them that bond of union which had existed in their boyhood. He confided, he trusted, as before ; but day by day, and hour by hour, there came upon him convictions that Caillet was not worthy of the place he held in the household of the Count de Mauvinet ; that he loved not the hand that showered benefits on his head ; that he was discontented, even with the high favour in which he stood ; in short, that there was a bad spirit within his breast, though it was difficult to discover to what it tended or what it sought.

In the mean while, the change in Caillet himself went on. He soon became convinced that Adela loved him not, but he did not abandon on that account any one of his purposes or hopes. He saw that it would be necessary, indeed, to pursue those hopes and purposes more circumspectly ; and as he was naturally of a reserved and impenetrable nature, he shut up



his thoughts and feelings in his own bosom, waiting for the time — which he judged to be near approaching — when in the overthrow of all order, and the disruption of all the principles of society, he might burst the bonds that held him, and gratify every passion of his heart. His hatred for Albert Denyn, and his love for Adela, or rather the sort of passion which he called love — for it deserved not really the name — went hand in hand with his ambition ; and every murmur of the peasantry of France, every scene of misery on the one part, and violence and wrong on the other, called up the hopes of obtaining possession of Adela by any means, however harsh and violent, and of destroying him whom he envied by any device, however base and wicked.

Even while he was jealous of Albert, however, his vanity led him to undervalue him ; and when he saw the growing attachment of the youth towards Adela de Mauvinet, and the notice which she bestowed upon him, believing it impossible that she could ever really love him, he did all that he could to encourage

Albert, without seeming to do so, in a course which he hoped and believed would lead him to destruction. He pictured to himself, with joy, the indignation of the Lord of Mauvinet, should he ever discover that the creature of his bounty had ventured to look with the eyes of love upon his daughter ; and the words of anger and indignation, which he had sometimes feared might fall upon himself, he hoped to hear poured forth upon his young companion.

Such had been his feelings shortly before the opening of this book, and the changes that they underwent afterwards have explained themselves. It may easily then be conceived, what were his sensations now, when, under the impulse of passion and opportunity, he had taken a step which his better judgment told him was rash, if not absolutely foolish, and when the result had been total disappointment, and, for the time, apparent ruin and destruction.

There was now no return for him, no repentance, no recovery : the act was done that shut him out for ever from a look behind : in the energy of despair was his only hope ; and the entire

overthrow of every existing thing was the only instrument which he could now employ. It might have seemed, at first sight, that he had little opportunity to bring such great things to pass — that he was friendless, helpless, powerless. It was so, and yet Caillet did not despair of being able still to break up the very principles of society in the land wherein he lived, and by such means to work out his own dark ends. There was a strong impression upon him that great minds make the circumstances in which they live, and that a powerful will, joined to native genius, can do all. In some degree, perhaps, he was right, though he knew not that the greatest of all moral powers is virtue, and that wanting that, he wanted the crowning energy of all; which insures to genius and to resolution the utmost success that it can obtain on earth. It was a defect that he felt not, and therefore he was confident, even in the midst of disappointment and reverse.

He had made now his way across the land alone: every where he had heard of warring parties, and bands, which might oppose his

course. He found fear and anxiety wherever he turned, but he had gone on in safety. Obstacles had seemed to disappear from before his steps, and from such facility he derived an augury of future success. He had now reached a spot where he knew that much misery existed; where various fierce bands of adventurers, during his lord's absence, had ravaged and destroyed. He was aware, also, that amongst the peasantry of many of the neighbouring nobles tyranny and oppression of the basest kind had been exercised by the lords of the soil themselves. Here, then, he was sure to find want, and grief, and discontent; and those were the elements with which he proposed to work.

With almost every one in the neighbourhood around William Caillet was more or less acquainted; but the rough and honest peasant, though he might be led at an after period to follow the multitude, was not the person suited to his present purpose; and with careful skill he sought for the dwellings of those alone who could serve him as tools or assist him as confederates.

At a late hour, then, as we have shown, he wandered on through the wood, notwithstanding the darkness, and the danger, and the solitude, although he might have found many a dwelling far nearer to the place at which night overtook him, where the inhabitants, ignorant of what had taken place at Mauvinet, would have received him with pleasure and hospitality. At length he stopped at the door of a hut, one of the poorest, apparently, in all the land around, in the aspect of which there was nothing, certainly, to attract the wayfaring traveller, and make him hope for either accommodation or welcome there. It was situated upon the extreme edge of the forest, in the depths of the low brushwood which surrounded it; and it seemed, in fact, though it was not so, to be the abode of some inferior woodman or keeper of the game. It consisted of four square walls of mud, and a roof thatched with fern and straw mingled together. There was a window on either side, that is to say, an aperture, which, at that late hour of the

night, was blocked up with a board of rough sapin. All appeared dark therein, except where a treacherous flaw in the wood-work betrayed at one point a faint glimmering of light, showing that the fire was not yet extinguished. Behind the building were seen several low sheds, from which, every now and then, issued forth an inharmonious noise, announcing that the master of the abode was a feeder of that useful sort of beast, which contributes, perhaps, more than any other, to the support and convenience of man in almost every country of the world.

When opposite the dark line of the hut, Caillet paused and gazed around him. "Still the same," he said to himself, "still the same ! misery, and filth, and dirt ! — They have cut down much wood here," he continued, "and doubtless it will be said that the enemy did it, the adventurers, the free companions. They are good friends to the warm farmer's fireside, however much he may cry out upon them. One half of the fuel they take goes to keep him warm, that is certain. — It matters not

to me, however : this poor wretch, here, dare not cut down the wood, I fancy. He has not been taught to dare yet—we will see whether he be an apt scholar ;” and, turning to the door, he knocked aloud, exclaiming, “ Ho ! within there ! let me in !”

At first no answer was returned, and again Caillet struck heavily upon the door, exclaiming, “ Let me in there ! it is vain to pretend sleep : I see the light through the crevices — open the door.”

“ Get thee gone, get thee gone,” cried a surly voice from within, answering him at length — “ get thee gone while thou art safe and well : if thou stayest longer, I will give thee a shot with the crossbow.”

“ A crossbow !” exclaimed Caillet with a sneering laugh, “ where shouldst thou get a crossbow, poor wretch ? — it is I, Morne ! it is I, William Caillet ! Let me in, I say. Prate not to me of crossbows, man ; thou that never hadst an iron pike in thy life, where shouldst thou get a crossbow ?”

“ Do not open, do not open !” cried a woman’s



voice: "it cannot be Caillet—Caillet is far away."

"It is Caillet, sure enough," replied the man's voice again—"I know him by his scoff."

"A good distinction," said Caillet to himself. "Come, open the door, Jacques Morne: I want shelter for the night; and though I might as well, I know, lie with one of thy pigs as in thy cottage, yet I want to speak to thee, so undo the bolt, man."

His tone and words leaving no longer any doubt of his identity, the door was opened, though still not without some hesitation. A faint light burst forth from some embers which were yet glowing on the hearth, and a dark and ragged figure presented itself in the doorway holding a crossbow in one hand, while over his right shoulder peeped the wild countenance of a woman, affording a terrible picture of misery and want. A loud unpleasant laugh burst from the man when he saw William Caillet; and he exclaimed aloud, "I told you so: I knew him by his scoff."

"Come, come," exclaimed Caillet, "let us



in, and tell me what you can give me for supper: I am hungry, Morne."

"Hungry!" exclaimed the man—"supper!—then you may remain hungry for all the supper you will find here: why I have been hungry for the last ten years, and never yet, but once, found sufficient food to say that I was not so."

"Ay, it is a sad case," said Caillet, "and yet you have no reason to complain."

"No reason to complain!" replied the man: "if I have not, who has, I wonder?"

"No one," answered Caillet, abruptly—"no one that suffers it. Why, think you now, that if you choose to go on starving all your days, and, moreover, seeing your wife and children starve too—think you that men will come and put food into your mouth when you might take it if you would? But get thee in, poor wretch, get thee in: stand not there with thy jaws apart, as if thunderstruck at hearing truth for once in thy life; get thee in and close the door, and I will find means to provide a supper both for myself and thee."

## CHAP. V.

AMONGST all the great moral lessons that Shakspeare, the greatest, perhaps, of all uninspired moralists, ever gave, there is none more striking, none that would be more beneficial to the human heart, if we would but apply and follow it, than the exhortation, "Take physic, pomp; expose thyself to feel what wretches feel." Well, well were it for us—well for the hearts of the rich, even more than for the comforts of the poor whom they visit, were that lesson more generally applied.

Did we examine with our own eyes, misery enough of all kinds would indeed be found in the world, at any time that the search was made; but, in the present day, it would be hardly possible to meet with any thing equal to that which the cottage of many a French peasant presented at the period of which I speak.

That into which Caillet now entered was superior, in various respects, to some, and yet what was it that he found? A long crazy shed of rough timber with the interstices filled up with mud; the floor was of the mere earth of the forest, beaten down by the treading of feet; and in the thatch above, at many points, as well as in several parts of the walls, were seen crevices, through which the night wind whistled at liberty, and the rain of winter might find free admittance. No bed did the place possess, except two piles of heath and withered leaves, nestled in one of which slept soundly two rosy babes, the children of hardihood and want. At the farther side, immediately underneath a round hole in the roof of the cottage, was a spot where the rare and scanty fire was made, and on which still glimmered a few dying embers, the only object which gave an appearance of cheerfulness to the desolate hut.

Caillet's eyes fixed there as he entered, and the unhappy owner of the place immediately exclaimed, as if fearful of blame, "It was all dry

wood, branches that had fallen — I picked it up myself, when I was driving out the swine.”

“And do you think that I would betray you, if it were not?” demanded Caillet. “Poor fool, am not I of the same class that you are? likely to meet with the same misery whenever it pleases the tyrants above us?—think you that I would betray you?”

“I know not, I know not,” answered Jacques Morne: “many a villain betrays another for what he can get.”

“Then he is only fit to be a noble,” replied Caillet, with a sneering smile; “but that is the fault, Morne, that is the fault — we are not united amongst ourselves: were we so, those men could not oppress us; but I will soon show you that I am not one of those who would betray you. Give me yon hatchet—I will speedily mend your fire.”

The wretched peasant gave him the hatchet as he had demanded; and Caillet opening the door again, went out and returned a moment after, loaded with several large branches of wood. “There,” he said, “if any

one asks you, tell him it was William Caillet who did it."

"Ay," answered the other, "and then, perhaps, they may punish me for William Caillet's fault."

"If they do," replied Caillet, "I will punish them. Now make you up the fire, and give me the crossbow: the moon is coming up; and though one might have better food than venison at this season of the year, we must not be too particular when hunger presses."

"What are you going to do?" exclaimed the man, turning pale at the very thought of any one killing his lord's game; "what are you going to do? Nay, Caillet, nay, think what you are about."

"I have thought, and right well," replied Caillet; "and I will tell you what I have thought, Morne — that these good beasts which God puts upon the earth — these good beasts in their brown coats, I say, were not sent hither for the benefit of those who call themselves lords, alone, but to feed mankind whenever man was hungry. The days are

changing, and all this will be set to rights. Give me the crossbow, man, give me the crossbow ! I know what I am doing ;” and snatching it from the unwilling hand of the swineherd, he once more went forth, but this time was somewhat longer absent.

Taking his way through the wood, he cut across a small angle in the neighbourhood of the cottage, till he came to the extreme verge of the forest, where the trees broke away, and some meadows and corn-fields were seen out beyond, in the clear light of the rising moon. There he stationed himself, amongst some brushwood, under the shadow of a tall tree ; being careful, however, to place himself on the side opposite to that from which the wind blew. He had waited some ten minutes, and was beginning to grow impatient, when, suddenly, he perceived, coming forth into the light, with a hopping, unequal pace, a large hare, every now and then stopping and raising up its long ears to listen for any approaching danger. The first sound that the unfortunate animal heard was the twang of Caillet’s

crossbow ; and the moment after — before it could spring away — the unerring bolt struck it, and it fell over struggling in the agonies of death.

“ This is better than larger game,” said Caillet, lifting it from the ground : “ it is enough, and will leave no traces.” He then returned to the cottage, or rather hut, and throwing down the hare before the peasant’s wife, he said, “ There, make it ready, my good woman, quickly ; and be in no fear, I will answer for what I have done.”

“ Oh I am in no fear,” replied the woman : “ it is he who is so frightened. Often do I tell him that we were never intended to starve ; and that if food is not given to him he must take it.”

“ You speak wisely, you speak wisely,” said Caillet : “ I know not why we should be hungry more than the men that live in castles — do you, good dame ? ”

“ No, by my faith, not I,” rejoined the woman ; “ and though it is not for myself I care, yet my children shall have food.”



The man had looked on in silence, but the mention of the children roused him; and he exclaimed, "They should not be hungry long, were there any other means of finding them meat for one day, without depriving them of it the next. Here Caillet dares to take a hare, or very likely a roe, were he to find one, because he is a favourite of his lord, who would protect him against mine; but were I to kill either one or the other, who would protect me from a dungeon, if not from hanging? and then, what would become of the children?"

"Why, they would not be much worse than they were before," replied the woman, in a sharp tone, which instantly called forth a reply from her husband, of an angry kind.

But Caillet waved his hand, exclaiming, "Cease, cease: this is one of the consequences of misery, dissension instead of union; but all this shall soon come to an end. I tell thee, Jacques Morne, that the time is not far off when the fire shall blaze freely on every peasant's hearth through France, and when no one shall ask him where the meat came from that fills his pot."



“Those will be bright times, indeed,” replied the man with a doubtful shake of the head; “but when will they come, Caillet, when will they come? Is not every day making our condition worse instead of better? We were always poor, now we are wretched; we were always slaves to one lord, but now we are beat about by thousands.”

“True, true,” answered Caillet, “and it wants but one thing more, to produce the change I have mentioned.”

“And what is that?” demanded the man eagerly, “what is that?”

“That the thousands buffet you,” replied Caillet, “till you can endure no longer — till you remember that you are many — till you are ashamed of being slaves to the few, and rend their chains asunder, as if they were but bands of straw. I say to you, that if they crush you, you deserve to be crushed; if they tread upon you, you deserve to be trampled; for every man that suffers tyranny commits a crime against his fellow-slaves.”

Jacques Morne gazed down upon the ground for several minutes. "It is all very true," he answered at length, "it is all very true, I dare say, and many a man would rise to shake off this accursed state if we knew what to do, and how to do it. — As the woman says, we could not be much worse than we were before. I have often thought when we sat shivering here, without food, or fire, or light, or hope, that it would be better to kill her and them, and then myself. I can't help believing that death would be very comfortable to people that suffer as we do; but yet we have no one to guide us, to lead us, or tell us how to act; and suppose I were to say that I would bear it no longer; that I am a man as well as the Lord of St. Leu; that I would have right, and food for my children; that no one had any business to make me carry wood to the castle upon my back, and for my pains only give me blows to make me go on faster — what would be the consequences, Caillet? — what if a dozen were to do so? We should all be beaten till we were black and yellow, and most likely five or six of us would be hung

from the branches of the oak, or the spouts of the castle. Is it not so?"

"Most likely it is," replied Caillet, coolly, "and serve you very right too, if you did such things without due deliberation and counsel. You want somebody to lead you, and tell you what to do: is it so? — Well, I will do both, Morne: only promise me, that when I do tell you what to do, I shall find you ready to show yourself a man, and not a mere beast of the orest, as these tyrants would make you. Promise me, too, that you will not speak one word of these things till the time is come, and I give you leave."

"Why, I thought but now," said Jacques Morne, "that you cared not who knew of your actions: you bade me tell them that you took the wood, that you killed the game."

"So I did," replied Caillet, "and so I tell you still. Should it be ever inquired into, say so, at your will. It is no personal risk I fear. But I tell thee, Morne, that did I suspect for one minute thou wouldst go and betray my counsel in matters where others are concerned

that thou wouldst frustrate my hopes of delivering the peasantry of France, by saying that Caillet is here, or Caillet is there, stirring up the people to revolt, I would take up yon axe and dash out thy brains this moment. But I know thee better, and have no fear : there is about thee an honesty, made dogged by oppression, and which our tyrants call sullenness, which will make thee bear the rack or the bernicles, sooner than betray my trust."

"No, no," replied the man, "I will not betray thee ; but I fear you deceive yourself, Caillet, and that with all your fine words you will find no one to be the first."

Caillet laughed bitterly. "I am the first myself," he said: "I have been the first to shake off the yoke. I, at least, am a free man, if none will follow me. The tyrants now know me, as I have long known them. I have cast their chains from off my hands, I tell thee, and have spat at and defied them ; and though their blood-hounds have been out after me over the whole land, they have not caught me, Morne."

"Ay, this is something like now," cried the

other, grasping his hand : "once the strife begun, and there is hope ; but tell me more, Caillet, tell me more ? "

"When the time comes, I will tell you all," replied Caillet : "at present there is but little to tell. Were I alone to set myself up against these men, and put myself in their power, it would be the same with me as with you. We must have union, we must take counsel with others, we must have many men of different characters and kinds combined ; we must conceal our purposes and our plans ; we must have meetings of few, and meetings of many, and we must pretend that all these meetings have no other view than to deplore our sad condition, and the lamentable state of all France, given up as a spoil to the enemy. Then we must choose the best occasion ; and when we have insured the aid of numbers, and the good will of more ; when men's minds are excited by the story of their own sufferings, and their passions are hot, with a view of the wealth and prosperity of others, then we must suddenly call upon them to do great deeds, and let them

rise against their enemies, before pale fear has time to make them hesitate. Once begun, the conquest of our freedom is half accomplished, for no man will then dare go back; for victory alone will give us security, at the same time that it gives us power, and wealth, and happiness."

While Caillet spoke, his companion gazed down upon the ground, and strange were the manifold expressions that passed over his countenance. That countenance itself was naturally dull and inexpressive; but when upon such a face strong passions display themselves by outward signs, the effect is even greater than where the features are naturally less cold and heavy. Sometimes it seemed as if his whole soul were carried away by the bright hopes which Caillet's words displayed before his eyes; at other times, however, doubts seemed to rise up, and fears to take possession of his breast, as well they might, for at that time the dream of resisting their feudal tyrants had never yet entered into the mind of any of the peasantry of France, except that of the bold man who

now addressed him. The words which he heard, however, the confidence with which his companion spoke, the natural ascendancy of hope in the human mind, all had their effect; and the thought of revenge, which was pleasant to him, as well as enjoyment and abundance, which he had never known, all affected him in turns, and made him resolve to dare the worst, rather than lose the prospect of things so coveted.

All he replied, however, was, "Thou art a bold man, Caillet, thou art a bold man."

"I am," answered Caillet, with his usual sneer upon his lips, "and I hope that thou art a bold man, too, Morne, for none but bold men deserve to be free. I work not to liberate willing slaves: those that are so may remain so for me; but those who thirst for freedom, as I do myself, I will make free, if it be in the power of man to do so, and that it is in our power who can doubt? Are we not in numbers as ten to one? are we not more hardy, more inured to want, and privation, and fatigue, than they are? You will say that they



have arms, let us take their weapons from them ; wealth, that wealth will soon be ours, if we do but strive rightly to make it so. Riches will then bring many to our cause, who leave us lonely so long as we are poor, and despise us so long as we are submissive. The people of the towns, who have set us the example in a long and bloody struggle with the men who were then their tyrants, and are now ours — they will aid us too, when they see us resolved and ready ; they, too, will assist and make common cause with us, when they find that we will bear the yoke no longer. Though they have accomplished their own freedom, they still suffer many grievances : they will take the opportunity to redress those, while we redress ours ; and even were they to seek nothing but their selfish benefits, they would do us good, by dividing the power of the lords.”

“Thou hast thought of it all,” replied Jacques Morne, “thou hast thought of it all : I will go with thee, Caillet, to the death.”

“Go with me to life and happiness, Morne,” replied Caillet, in a tone full of confidence.



“If we are resolute and true to ourselves, death is far from us—death is for those who oppose men seeking their liberty. But we must have much counsel, Morne. Do you remember an old man who lived upon the hill above Clermont, who had great experience, and some learning; who had been with his lord into foreign lands, had seen many a strange sight; and marked many a curious fact? Is he living still?”

“Oh yes,” replied the other, “he is living, and still there—Old Thibalt, you mean; but I know not how it is, he is not loved.”

“Wise men are seldom loved,” replied Caillet, “because they have to deal with fools.”

“Ay,” answered Morne; “but it is not for that, Caillet, that old Thibalt is not loved: it is, that he does good to no one: though he has plenty of money, he gives not to those who are poor. He thinks of himself and of his own cunning; and when he hears of our miseries, he only laughs at them.”

“Well may he laugh,” rejoined Caillet, “when you are fools enough to bear the

misery that you could redress with your own hands. Well may he laugh and set you at nought. — And yet," he continued, seeing that Morne's brow grew somewhat contracted, "and yet, what you say is, in some degree, true: the man is selfish, he always was; but in this world who is not, Morne? who thinks not more or less of himself in all the concerns of life? I pretend to no such virtue; and the man who does pretend to it, be sure, is a hypocrite. However, we have nothing to do with his motives, so that he helps us with his counsel. If he joins us, it will be the surer sign of our success."

"Ay, that it will," answered the other; "for there is not a man throughout the land who will not say, 'Old Thibalt would not have joined them unless they had been sure to win.'"

"Then his name is, in itself, a host," replied Caillet; "for the expectation of success is the great first step to it. But now let us see where I can sleep o' nights, Morne? Can you not place me somewhere where I can remain unknown, and you can visit me after dark?"

“Then you are obliged to conceal yourself,” said Morne. “I thought that you were come openly and boldly, to proclaim our liberty.”

“Would that I could do so!” replied the other. “Have I not already said that all depends on caution? and with me life itself hangs on prudence. You must meet, Morne, without my presence; you must consult, without my being there. You must seem scarce to know that such a person exists; and yet you must tell me all things that take place, and act by my directions alone!—Is this asking much—perhaps too much, Morne? You may, however, follow or reject the advice I give you. You may betray me or not, as you like, yourself; it is for you to choose, for you to determine. I only tell you the way, the only way by which your freedom can be worked out: having so done, you must do the rest. In three days the news will follow me hither, that William Caillet has rebelled against his lord and fled. Then every man that is seen with him, or who dares consort with him, even for an hour,

will stamp himself for ever as an enemy to our lordly tyrants; and for him the dungeon or the gallows will be all that is left. I have put myself in your power, Morne, and you can do what you will; but depend upon it, that with my fate is wrapped up your own freedom."

"You are right, Caillet, you are 'right,'" said Jacques Morne, "and I will do as you would have me. I have thought of a place too, where you can lodge like a boar in his lair. Do you not know in the middle of the wood there is a hut, where I saw you once, when your lord came hither to hunt with mine? I was to have had it first for my dwelling, but it was judged that I should be better here; and so they changed their purposes and brought me hither. No one has inhabited it, but it is still good; and very often, when I drive the swine into that part of the forest, I sit therein, and think how happy man might be if other men would let him. There you can have as good a house as this is; and there is a way out behind, too, by

the dingle and over the hill; so that in any time of need you have nought to do but to slip out by the door behind, and away. I can visit you there every night, and bring you what you want."

"Which will be but small," replied Caillet, "nor will my hiding last long. However, Morne, as thou wilt have to purchase for me something, here is money. Of that I have got abundance, and can command more. There is a golden crown for you, take that; and early to-morrow buy me some wine, and bring it to——"

"A golden crown!" cried the man, taking the money in his hand and looking at it: "bring thee wine, Caillet! Dost thou drink wine?"

"Ay," answered Caillet, "and so shalt thou, Morne, if thou followest what I tell thee to do: wine shall be as plentiful with thee, ere a month pass over, as it is at the table of the best lord in all the land; but in the mean time thou shalt share of mine: so take the money, and let the wine be bought."

“A golden crown!” repeated the man: “I dare not take it, Caillet. They would not give me the wine, and would ask me loudly where I got the gold. They would say I had stolen it, and take me to a prison.”

“Fie! nonsense!” exclaimed his wife, who was, by this time, deep in the mysteries of cooking a hare in the most simple fashion: “thou art a fool, Jacques: give me the crown, and I will buy the wine. Then, should any one ask me, I will say that a charitable gentleman going through the forest gave me the money. No fear — there is no fear, man! No fear; give me the money! Now, Master Caillet, your supper shall be ready ere ten minutes more are over; and if you give us such every night in the week, you shall have my prayers, and the blessings of the children. So, if my husband fail thee, I will not; and he must follow where I lead, I trow.”

## CHAP. VI.

It was the third morning after that which succeeded the visit of Caillet to the swineherd's cottage, and he now sat in solitude within a lonely hut, situated in the midst of one of those wide forests, which, in that day, covered a very large portion of the soil of France. His habitation was composed of rough wood; and as a change of mind had taken place amongst the builders, while the small tenement was being erected, the mud with which the crevices were to have been filled had been applied but to one side of the building; so that the other three were only stopped by a quantity of dried leaves and moss, which had been crammed into the crevices. Many efforts had been made to give the place an air of comfort since Caillet himself had tenanted it; but the attempt had produced very little effect, and the aspect of

the interior was that of desolation. A stool and a table had been formed of the crooked branches of the trees; and the bed of dry leaves which one corner contained had been delicately covered over with moss, which glistened in its fresh greenness, as if a velvet pall had been there cast down upon the ground. A fire was lighted in another corner, for it was now cold; and in a third, stood several of the large leathern bottles, which were the common vehicles of wine in those days.

The face of Caillet, however, was dark and gloomy, and bitter as well as agitated were the images which tenanted his bosom. Hope has not so terrible an enemy as long solitary thought; and for several days Caillet had remained there, only seeing the swineherd once in the course of the evening, shortly after the sun had gone down. While he had been actively employed in threading the dangerous ways between Touraine and the Beauvoisis, his mind had rested little upon the past, and he had gone on, day by day, thinking only of the



present. Such, however, was not the case now: he was alone, without occupation for mind or body during the greater part of the day; and upon the past — though contemplation could not have chosen a more painful subject — all his thoughts now dwelt, whether he would or not.

Oh happy, thrice and fully happy, is the man who can suffer his mind calmly to repose upon memory, without finding ought in all her stores to darken and embitter his review of the times gone. Such, however, was not at all the case with William Caillet: there was scarcely one spot on which his eye rested, as he looked back, which did not offer something painful to his sight. Besides the thousand opportunities cast away through life, which every man has to regret; besides the follies and the faults committed, with which very few, even of the best, may not reproach themselves; there were innumerable opportunities wilfully neglected, there were innumerable faults and follies knowingly performed.

But besides regrets that would intrude, there was a sensation, the most painful of all

others, creeping upon Caillet at this time :—a sensation which nothing could have produced in a mind so vain and stubborn as his, so proud, so resolute, except the power of solitary thought : it was the conviction that he might be wrong, the consciousness that if he had chosen another path he might have been wiser, greater, happier than he ever could be now, even were his efforts to be crowned with the utmost success. But there was something more than even that conviction — something which aggravated the pain thereof, in a very great degree : it was a growing belief that those efforts were not likely to succeed ; that the men he had calculated upon for great deeds were not capable of accomplishing them ; that vast objects — we must not call them good ones — could not be appreciated or understood by the beings he had to work upon ; and that those even who had some faint glimmering of higher things and more important purposes than mere temporary deliverance from a particular inconvenience, each proposed to himself some individual benefit, some personal advantage,

which would, in all probability, interrupt the pursuit of any great general object at every step, and ultimately overthrow the whole enterprise. He cursed them all in his heart, and — strange as it may seem to those before whose eyes the whole of Caillet's selfishness and baseness has been openly displayed — he railed at the persons through whose interested pursuit of their own views his purposes were likely to be frustrated, as bitterly as if he himself had been actuated by the most disinterested patriotism, and as if every thing that he did was undertaken solely for the benefit of his fellow-creatures. The doubt of attaining his present object was to him a curse, indeed, during his solitary hours; for on success his every hope was staked; and when he thought of Adela de Mauvinet and her disdain, of Albert Denyn and his good fortune, of the noble master whom he had repaid with ingratitude and injury — when he thought of all these, I say, and, at the same time, feared that his schemes would not succeed, the bitterness of his heart knew no bounds.

Often would he start from his seat and take two or three steps across the hut in angry haste, and then return to the settle again and brood in dark despondency over every gloomy feature of his fortune. There was still one idea, however, which seemed to comfort him, and produced a dark and savage smile of satisfaction whenever his mind rested on it.

“They will certainly rise,” he said to himself, “they will certainly rise”; for that, at least, they are ripe, if not for greater things. Some revenge will assuredly be mine; and that is the first object—I shall have some vengeance, if I have nothing more.”

But still sad thoughts and anticipations would return. The old man Thibalt had never visited him, though he had twice sent to urge him so to do; and from the reluctance which such conduct displayed, he naturally supposed that the wary veteran suspected his views, and judged not favourably of his enterprise. He was now waiting the result of a third application, couched in such terms as he fancied might awaken the avarice of the old

man, for his ambition he had failed to arouse ; and the period which his impatience had fixed as necessary for his messenger to return had already long expired, so that he was meditating gloomily upon the next step to be taken ; giving, from time to time, a bitter look towards the past, or a desponding gaze towards the future, when some sounds, as of coming feet, met his ear ; and gazing through one of the chinks in the dilapidated wall, he beheld the swineherd Morne on foot accompanied by the old man Thibalt riding on an ass.

The hopes of Caillet rose ; but he had learned, as every one will learn, who gives himself up to the sway of evil passions, to be an actor — a dissembler, if not a hypocrite ; and to assume such an aspect as was calculated to produce a certain effect upon the minds of others, instead of allowing the natural emotions of his own mind to appear.

That man has suffered a great and terrible loss, a loss of one of the heart's best jewels, who has been taught to frame his words and looks with a reference to the opinion of others rather than

to his own feelings, whose tones have an object, whose smiles and frowns are schemed. Doubtless it was the purpose of the Great Being who gave to man such varied powers of expressing his sensations—the infinite shades of intonation in the voice, the rapid play of features, and even the movements of the limbs—doubtless it was his will that all should harmonise, the one with the other, and the whole be the pure expression of the human heart; and yet, since evil has had dominion over the human race, and all the gifts of God have been perverted, how rarely, except in a child, do we find the countenance and the lips speaking together the real emotions of the spirit, and the unadulterated thoughts of the mind.

William Caillet, however, had been long too deeply plunged in evil purposes and vain ambitions to retain any thing like candid truth about him; and though his was a bold hypocrisy, the hypocrisy of pride and strong passions, he was none the less a dissembler. In the present instance he knew well the character of the man with whom he had to deal;

and though he trembled at the idea of losing the aid of one whose cunning and experience supplied the place of those qualities which he himself wanted, he prepared to receive him with no crouching persuasions, but with that daring and firm demeanour which was the most opposite to the spirit of Thibalt himself. He knit his brow, then, he set his teeth, and folding his arms upon his chest, sat with his fine lustrous eyes fixed upon the door of the hut till it opened, and the swineherd and his companion appeared.

“ So you are come at length, Master Thibalt !” he said, with a frown. “ Pray, why came you not when first I sent for you ? By Heaven, I have no light mind to take and dash your brains out against the door-post for keeping me here two whole days when I have business elsewhere !”

He spoke so furiously, that the old man drew back in evident alarm : but, the moment after, he replied, “ Nay, nay, Master Caillet, I could not come when you first sent : I had people with me, as Jaques Morne can tell you, and——”



“And you had heard,” added Caillet with a look of scorn, “that William Caillet had rebelled against his lord, and set him at defiance ——”

“Ay, and tried to carry off his daughter !” rejoined Thibalt, with a low laugh that he could not suppress.

“And, moreover, that there is a reward offered for his head ! — Is it not so ?” added Caillet, bitterly.

“No, no ! Is there ?” exclaimed the old man, with his eyes twinkling at the idea of profitable treachery. “I heard not of it. Have they offered a reward ?”

“I know not,” answered Caillet, “and little care, for no man will betray me.”

“Are you sure of that, good William ?” asked the old man, with a grin — “quite sure ? — There are sad villains in France, good Caillet : you must not trust every one. There are many rogues amongst us.”

“But none so bold,” rejoined Caillet, “as to betray me when he is certain of dying within ten days after ; for rewards little profit a dead



man ; and there are more than one hundred of the youths of Touraine bound by oath before the Virgin to kill the man who gives me up, within ten days after the act."

Thibalt sunk into himself again ; for though he was not one to believe easily any thing but that of which he had proof, yet the oath Caillet mentioned was so like the times, and a vow before the Virgin to commit murder was so in character with the savage ignorance of the peasantry, that there was a great probability of such an act having taken place. In as much, too, as the term of his earthly being was naturally drawing towards an end, and his hopes regarding the future not very sanguine, he was fearful of losing any portion of a life within which he had bounded his desires, and shrunk from the thought of encountering the menaced death, though even death itself he would have risked for the certain attainment of gold.

"What, then ?" he said, after a moment's pause—"you are not sure that there is a reward offered for your apprehension ? Then you have nothing to fear."

“ I fear nothing, and have nothing to fear, old man,” answered Caillet. “ If I had, I should not have sent for you, who would sell your own child for the price of a wolf’s head.”

“ Thank God I have no child,” replied Thibalt, with his accustomed grin of misanthropic bitterness, “ or I know not what might happen. But what is it that you want with me, good Caillet? For though the news has reached us that you have defied the Lord of Mauvinet, and was forcing away his daughter, when you were overtaken by Albert Denyn — good little Albert, who, when he left us last, was as fair a stripling as my eyes ever saw — when you were overtaken by little Albert, I say, who drew upon you, and forced you to give up the lady ——.”

The old man spoke with premeditated malice ; for there is a sort of ill nature which seems to give an instinctive perception of every weak and painful part in the hearts of our fellow-creatures. But Caillet interrupted him furiously, exclaiming, “ He is a liar ! a cowardly liar ! — He force me ! ”

“Nay, so came the report,” replied Thibalt: “I know nothing of it. But what wantest thou with me, Caillet? for though we have heard all this, yet I see not how I can help thee.”

“They have sent forth falsehoods,” answered Caillet; “they have sent forth falsehoods, as they always do, to deceive the poor peasantry of France, and prevent them from taking advantage of the only moment that has presented itself for years—the only moment that will ever come, for breaking their bonds, and revenging many a century of oppression; but they shall find themselves deceived. Now will I tell you what I want with you, old Thibalt, if Morne have not already told you; but we must have some one to watch that no enemy comes. Get you up upon the hill, my good friend Morne, and keep an eye upon the country round, while I repeat to Thibalt here all that I have told you already. When we hold council, I will call you. At present, we only speak of what you already know.”

Morne showed some unwillingness to be left out of the conference, but obeyed Caillet's directions after a few words of persuasion ; while the old man Thibalt remained silent, with his eyes fixed upon the ground, and a look of deep thought taking place of the sarcastic grin upon his countenance.

"Caillet," he exclaimed as soon as the other was gone, "Caillet, you are either a madman, or much more sure of all your steps than I can believe possible, if you have trusted such an ignorant fool as that."

"I am *not* a madman," answered Caillet, "and I *am* sure of my steps. But that has nothing to do with my trusting Jacques Morne. He is honest, old Thibalt, and will betray no one. He would bear torture and death sooner than utter a word of what he hears. I know each man with whom I deal, and act as I am sure they deserve at my hands. But think not that I confide either in Morne or any other more than needful. I have sent him hence even now ; for though he may

be as serviceable as any other in bold deeds, and strong resolutions, yet his head would but embarrass council."

"But you will trust me, good Caillet, you will trust me fully: — is it not so?" demanded the old man, his grin returning in a slight degree. "You will make an exception in my favour?"

"No!" answered Caillet, sternly. "Do not suppose, Thibalt, that I am attempting to cajole you; I know you too well for that. You are not apt to be cheated; and, to say truth, are not worth the trouble of cheating. Your qualities are different from those of Morne, and ——"

"You desire to use both for your own purposes," interrupted Thibalt.

"And if I do, where is the harm?" demanded Caillet. "We have all our own purposes; and if yours be accomplished at the same time that mine are, what matters it to you? — Listen to me. I am willing to trust you, Thibalt, and to trust you fully; not because you are either honest, or true; but because you are not brave, and, knowing what

you know, dare not betray me, even were it your interest to do so. You hate the tyrants that grind us as well as I do. I have heard you a thousand times throw out to the peasants, at Christmas time, such biting hints as would have stung worms to rise; but revenge upon the nobles is not your chief passion. It is love of gold! Now both shall be gratified — both vengeance and avarice. I, on my part ——”

“ Yet a while — yet a while !” cried the old man: “ let us take things in order, Caillet. You have said enough respecting me to require some reply, and I will give you an answer at once upon each head. First, you own that you seek to use all men for your purposes.”

“ Not more than they will use me for theirs,” interrupted Caillet: “ let each use the other, and each help the other.”

“ Well, well, such is wise council,” replied the old man; “ and so may it be with you and I, Caillet, if we can first understand the preliminaries rightly. But when you talk of *using* me and Morne for your purposes, you forget it is a long while since I have been so *used*, and I am

not a beggar's dog to guide any man whither he will, without knowing where or why, and with only such a share as he chooses to give me. What I mean is this, Caillet — instead of *using* me, league with me, and we may perchance do much."

"Such was what I meant," rejoined Caillet, "if I find you ready and willing; but I am first, Thibalt, and I command, though it may be with your council and with your support, if you will give it. If not, say so at once; for you and I know too much to be able to deceive each other."

"I will speak more on that head by and by," replied the old man. "It is right that we should understand every step as we go; so this one being determined, that I am not to be used but to be consulted, let me say a word about bravery. What do you call brave, Caillet?"

"That which you are not!" answered Caillet, with the sneer which always curled his lip, in moments of tranquillity resuming its place for the moment. "That which you are not, Thibalt!"



Bravery is not alone the courage which makes a man fight when he cannot avoid it, for the sparrow and the dove peck impotently the hand that grasps them ; not the courage which leads man to endure what he cannot avoid, for the bird brought down by the bolt of the fowler utters no cry, but eyes him silently till he wrings its neck. No ; to be brave, is to feel the spirit rise and glory at the thought of strife ; to seek the danger, and find the perilous cup of enterprise more inspiring than the strongest wine ; to see, where the way opens in the very face of death, nought but a new road to triumph and to power. 'This is to be brave.'

"And this is what thou art, I know well," replied Thibalt, who caught a spark of his companion's fire from the vehemence with which he spoke ; "and if ever there was a man fit to rouse the slavish peasantry of France to struggle for rights that they have not only lost but forgotten, thou art he. Nevertheless, I am quite contented with the other sort of courage. As you grant that I can fight when needful, I leave it to you and such as

you to fight when it is not so. However, to spare the time which is precious, I will own that now, now is the moment, the only moment that ever France has seen for her peasantry—her true people—to deliver themselves from the bondage of tyrants, who too long have oppressed them; and that if this moment goes by, centuries may pass ere the hour come again. I will go farther still, Caillet, and tell thee that to behold the castles of these lords in flames, and their bodies strewing the plains, over which they have so often driven us like sheep, I would give—I would give this right hand. But I must first see my way clearly, Caillet—I must be assured of all that is before me—I must know what is to be the gain, and what the risk, and what the price.”

“What is to be gained, Thibalt!” exclaimed Caillet, “what is to be gained!—but I recollect,” he added bitterly; “I must show you the immediate objects—I must show you the individual gratifications to be obtained.—Listen! You know the castle of Clermont—you know its ostentatious lord—you know the riches

that it contains — the gold — the silver — the jewels? — Well, then, Thibalt, what think you will become of all that wealth when, followed by the band of avengers, I set my foot across the threshold of the place? — Now see you what is to be gained? Our objects are nearly the same, and our rewards will be nearly equal. You seek wealth and revenge, and I revenge and — and —” he was about to add the word *power*; but his keen clear insight into every turn of the minds of those with whom he had to act, showed him in time that he might raise up fears against himself, which it would be difficult to allay, and he added with a smile — “and I revenge — and love. We will both be gratified, Thibalt — we will both be gratified — ay and to the full; for I swear to you, by all I hold sacred, that if you go hand in hand with me in this, you shall share as I share in every thing that is taken.”

The old man laughed with a low, chuckling, well-satisfied laugh; but the next moment, some sort of apprehension seemed to come over him, and he said, after looking down upon the

ground for a moment or two in thought, "If we should not succeed, Caillet? if we should not succeed?"

"But we shall succeed," exclaimed Caillet, almost fiercely: "what should prevent us from succeeding but our own fears?"

"The fears of others," answered the old man. "What if the peasants will not rise, Caillet? what if, ere a sufficient number are in arms, we are attacked and defeated?"

"They will rise! they will rise!" answered Caillet confidently: "the fire of discontent and hatred is barely kept down in the breasts of the people. When some holyday bonfire has been piled up, and load after load cast upon it, till the flame seemed smothered out, and every spark of light extinguished, have you not seen, Thibalt, dark smoke rising up in sombre clouds, dull and heavy, and altogether unlike the glorious blaze of the devouring element? then suddenly comes some hand with a small insignificant light, touches the rolling volume of black vapour, and in a moment all is blaze and brightness! Such, Thibalt, such is the

picture of an enslaved people ; the fire of liberty still exists within their hearts, though the tyrants throw load after load upon it. From the midst of those loads rise up the clouds of discontent and sullen endurance, and murmured indignation, growing deeper and deeper, and blacker and more black, till suddenly some fiery spirit, more daring than the rest, bursts forth into resistance, and the flame spreads from one end of the land unto the other. Such, I tell thee, Thibalt, such is the state of France : now is the moment, and I am the man. Nay, I tell thee more, Thibalt, thou thyself knowest right well that it is as I have said ; none is more convinced than thou art that we are certain of success, or thou wouldest not have come hither. Thou art not a man — well aware as thou art that I am banned and proscribed by these tyrants — thou art not a man, I say, to set thy foot here, unless thou wert right sure that success is likely to follow me.”

“ I think it is, Caillet, I think it is,” replied the old man ; “ nay, I will own, I little doubt it, for reasons that I will tell thee of hereafter ; but

yet I would fain see clearly what is to be the result, should reverse, instead of fair fortune, attend you. What, I repeat, what if the peasants will not rise — what if our first step be a defeat in arms.”

“ I have considered that, too,” said Caillet ; “ and though I love not, when once I have thought of all things, and made up my mind to the result — although I love not, I say, to turn back my thoughts to dangers that I have considered and prepared for, yet I will tell thee, Thibalt, what must be the resource, if, as you say, the peasants should not rise, or if we should suffer defeat before our numbers are sufficient. Some brave spirits will join us assuredly, and with them would I form a band, which would scourge the land, rich and poor alike; the rich for having oppressed, the poor for having deserted me; and from the spoils of all I would enrich myself, and those that followed faithfully. Such should be the result in any case of reverse, but, nevertheless, we must take means to prevent reverses, Thibalt. Fancy not that, with all the fire and eagerness of my nature, I seek to hurry

forward before things are ripe ; far from it, Thibalt, far from it ; the greatness of my purpose shall make me patient, and, should it be necessary, for months and months I will consent to walk in darkness, and hide myself from my fellow-men. It is upon all these first steps, Thibalt, that I would fain consult you. Is the time come yet, or is it not ? ”

“ I believe it is,” replied the old man, “ I believe it is. In this part of the country I know that it wants but a spark to kindle the flame of which thou hast spoken. Thou canst judge better, however, thyself of other provinces of France. What are the feelings of the people of the south ? ”

“ Hatred ! ” answered Caillet, “ universal hatred towards their oppressors ; but you said, Thibalt, that you would tell me why you augur so well of our success. If you be not sure as I am of all France, how can you have any confidence in our fortunes ? ”

“ I will tell thee, Caillet,” replied the old man. “ It is because I count less upon the power of the peasantry, when they have risen, than upon



the baseness, the cowardice, and the disunion of their lords. Upon this I count, Caillet; and who shall say that I have not good reason, too, to count upon it, when they see no power in the land to put down even the smallest force of foreign brigands that infests it—when a hundred and fifty of the English islanders dare calmly approach the very gates of Paris, and find none to oppose them while they ravage one of the suburbs of the French capital? If these men have not power to crush a pitiful handful of foreign adventurers, where will they find strength, I ask, to resist the rising up of the people of France? It is upon this I calculate, it is from this I derive my hopes, Caillet.”

“ Upon that have I reckoned, too,” replied Caillet, “ for I have not thought less deeply than you, Thibalt; but I have gone farther still, and have foreseen that these lords will have no power even to retard us, till we have gained some great and signal triumph. On that triumph will depend the movements of an immense multitude; for not more than one in ten will join us at the first, who will come in when

they find that success is upon our side. Nor, Thibalt, is it alone the mere peasantry that will join us when the result is once secure. Have you heard the news from Paris, that met me as I came along, how the people of the towns are already leading the way, and will gladly unite with us when they see us successful?"

"Oh yes," answered the old man, "I have heard of all that, but beware of the townspeople, Caillet: they are proud of their liberty, and are but little anxious that we should share it."

"But we *will* share it," exclaimed Caillet. "Did I not tell you, Thibalt, that I intend to use all men? and these proud communes of the towns as well as others. If you would know my whole purpose, it is to employ the aid of these communes till we have conquered for ourselves, and then to force from them an acknowledgment of the equal rights of all men. Once let the peasantry of France have gained some advantage, Thibalt; once let them be tried in the fierce struggle, that must soon follow; and I tell thee such a force will be raised up, that

the lords and commons alike shall humbly bow the head before us, and thank us for permitting them to live on equal terms in the same land with ourselves. I have already held some conference with several of these discontented men from the towns, and I know they are ready and willing to make our success complete, as soon as they once see that we are likely to be successful."

"Ay!" said the old man, with a look of some surprise, "and have the citizens, the cautious, careful citizens, have they dealt with you, Caillet, you, banished, and fugitive, and poor, and powerless? Have they, then, held conferences with you, Caillet? their cause must be somewhat hopeless, meseems."

"Banished I am," replied Caillet, "and fugitive I am, but neither powerless nor poor, Thibalt. Deceive yourself not, my good friend you think that wealth is power; you have yet to learn, perhaps, that power is wealth. Power, too, I have, though you know it not, and power of the kind that gives wealth. This I tell thee, that though it might be somewhat dangerous

to keep much gold in this poor hut, and on the person of a man proscribed and fugitive, as you say, I have as much here as I need, even to accomplish great purposes. Thus this very night I shall give thee five crowns of gold to distribute amongst the peasantry, with such words as you shall judge fit, to produce the effects that we desire. Mind, Thibalt, mind: I know thee well! and therefore it is that I warn thee, this gold is not destined for thyself, and I will exact a strict account of every piece I give thee. Thou shalt not be without thy reward. For thyself thou shalt have one of these same golden crowns, and more according to the service that thou dost with that which is intrusted to thee."

"But five crowns!" said Thibalt musing: "the sum is small to distribute amongst the many whom I shall have to see."

"It is enough," answered Caillet, "it is quite enough, and it, with the gold piece for thyself, is all that I have here now; however, should need be, more can be soon procured. I told thee power was wealth; and be you sure that

these good commons would have had no dealings with me had they not found that I possessed such power. Here is the money ; and when it is all really and truly spent, spent so that thou canst tell me that for each crown thou hast two men's words to join us, two men whose hands and heads are worth the purchase, then come to me for more, and thou shalt have it, were it a thousand crowns."

The sight of the gold produced by Caillet at this moment had far more effect upon the old man than any thing that had passed before, although it must be owned that the various objections which he had started were more the effect of the natural timidity of age and caution, than any real doubt as to his companion's means of success ; for none knew the state of France better than old Thibalt, none knew better than he did the confusion that existed amongst all classes. He grasped the gold eagerly then, saying, " Ay ! this is good now : where did it come from, Caillet ? — Mauvinet ? "

" Mauvinet never saw it since it was coined,"

replied Caillet. "From Mauvinet I brought nothing with me but a sword and a horse; whatever else I have, has been gained since. However, all this matters not, Thibalt: art thou mine, I ask thee, art thou mine?"

"Ay," answered the old man, looking steadfastly at the gold: "as the priests make men say when they wed, I am thine, Caillet, for better for worse; and, to say truth, I fear little that it will be for the worse; so now let us to counsel: what is the first step to be taken?"

"Nay," said Caillet, "on those points I must have your aid, my good friend. Being once agreed, our interests are inseparable. What is to be done, think you?"

"The first grand thing," replied the old man, "is to get the people to meet in large bodies; it matters not much for what purpose: I think it had better be for prayer—prayer for deliverance from all the many enemies and evils that overwhelm the land. Then the priests themselves, who are the great supporters of our adversaries, will give us their unwitting help. Oh it is a mighty pleasant jest to make

those tyrants cut each other's throats, and I know not which is most hateful to me, priest or noble."

"But what next, what next?" demanded Caillet.

"Why, when they have met," answered the old man, "and when they have begun to pray against their grievances, let some one propose to them to consider how those grievances may be remedied."

"Right, right," exclaimed Caillet: "when once such a thing is discussed it will be easy to point out a way."

"Oh yes, but we must do all gently," replied the old man: "there must be nothing rebellious, nothing treasonable in the first words, Caillet; all must be soft, and reasonable, and *very loyal*: we must offer to these noble lords our help and aid against the common enemy; we must beseech them to take compassion upon France, and exert their mighty valour to put down the plunderers that infest the land."

"Nay, nay," cried Caillet — "they will



laugh you to scorn. All this will take too much time to do."

"Ay," said the old man, "to do — but not to propose."

"I understand, I understand now," rejoined Caillet, "and you are right: we must frighten neither lords nor peasantry by the name of great deeds, till great deeds are to be done."

"Assuredly not," answered the old man; "but as soon as ever the time comes when it is necessary they should be done, then we must suddenly plunge the people into acts that will leave them no choice but to go on or perish: we must put a barrier between them and all repentance, Caillet; we must dip them deep, deep up to the lips in blood, and with that red flood drown out every spark of remorse."

As he spoke, his shrewd, keen, withered countenance assumed an aspect almost fiendish, in which a degree of savage delight was mingled with bitter hatred, somewhat touched with scorn. That expression contrasted strongly and strangely with the looks of Caillet, who

sat for several moments with his eyes bent upon the ground, and, for the time, the lines of anxious grief taking place of the usual contemptuous curl of his lip. Stern and ruthless determination as well as violent passion and fierce anger is, from time to time, found even in the character of youth, but it needs long years of hardening experience to render the act of resolving upon dark and evil deeds any thing but painful to ourselves. At first the resolution to do wrong to others, acts upon our own heart and grieves ourselves; but afterwards, like those stimulating foods which, at first, are painful to the palate, but, in the course of time, become pleasant and even necessary to our existence, evil actions carry their delight with them, as was the case with the old man, Thibalt. Caillet, however, was not so far advanced in wickedness; and he felt no slight regret at the thought of being forced, at the very first step, to plunge into an ocean of blood. His vanity had always led him to believe that the greatness which he would attain might cast a mantle of glory over

any deeds that he might be compelled to commit, in order to reach the eminence he coveted, and that he would yet acquire a mighty name, unstained with any but those dignified crimes which human vanity and folly have combined to render honourable. But now, when cold-blooded, premeditated, wholesale murder was thus nakedly proposed to him, as the only means of attaining his end, the only hope of rising to power, and when he felt that what his companion said was but too true, and that some barrier must be placed between those that he was to lead and all retreat from the way on which he guided them; when he saw none other that could be raised up, but the dark and bloody one which the old man proposed, his heart experienced the anticipation of remorse; and while one demon seemed to urge him on, others scourged him even for the path which he chose.

“I am afraid,” said Caillet, at length, “I am very much afraid that it must be as you say, Thibalt. I would fain spare human blood, if possible; but there seem no other means,

and we must take those which present themselves."

"Would fain spare human blood!" exclaimed the old man, with a look of contempt. "What, Caillet, is this you — you, who so speak? This is strange enough: what is it that you pretend to? Would you be a great man or a little one? free or a slave? powerful or impotent? successful or frustrated? If you would be a great man, you must shed blood, William Caillet: all great men have shed blood in this world, and ever will do so. If you would be free, you must shed blood, Caillet, for the times require it, and there is no other means of freedom. If you would have power, you must shed blood: power was never gained but by bloodshed. If you would be successful, you must shed blood; for success can only be purchased by the blood of our tyrants."

"I know it, I know it right well," answered Caillet, "and I am prepared for it, Thibalt; but yet I may be permitted to regret it; and, above all things, at first, we must have no mention made of bloodshed to the people: we

must let them come to the thought of it by degrees."

"Oh they will come to the thought of it speedily enough," replied the old man: "the people of France, Caillet, the people of France, is but a tiger chained: once loose him, and he springs to blood, as to his natural food. Our only difficulty will be to keep the risen slaves from drenching the whole land in gore, when sometimes it may be necessary to spare."

"We must try," answered Caillet, "we must try, but, at all events, no more of this for the present to any one; and now tell me, Thibalt, where and when can you hold the first meeting?"

"Why, any where," said the old man in reply; "it matters not much where."

"Nay," answered Caillet, "not so; it matters much, Thibalt; for I must be near at hand, though not present. As you say, it will be better that these assemblings should take place at some religious place. Do you remember the chapel some five leagues hence, by the edge of the forest, as you go to Beauvais?"

His companion nodded his head, and Caillet

continued:—“ Well, when I was here last there was a good old simple man there, a priest, who was himself a serf by birth. He would be easily induced, not knowing that there was any other object, to offer up prayers for the comfort of the people. Nay more, I am not sure that, when the first steps are taken, we may not manage to draw him to our cause. Nothing, however, must be said to him, in the beginning, but that the poor people of Beauvoisis do beseech him to offer prayers to Heaven for their deliverance from their enemies. Let Heaven judge, Thibalt, who those enemies are. The good priest will willingly consent, if he be there still, which I doubt not; and then many things can be done and said, when the people meet to join in his orisons. You, yourself, can call the best of them together—by the best, I mean the wisest and the freest. Let them speak to the others, gradually preparing for after meetings; and before those come, you and I will be ready to take advantage of them. Shall it be so, Thibalt?”

“ Exactly,” answered the old man; “ but

here, Caillet, you will find us more prepared than you expect, more, doubtless, than in the south."

Caillet well understood that the last part of what the old man said was a trap intended to discover what was the state of preparation in other parts of France, rather than a mere abstract expression of belief; and he replied at once to his companion's thoughts:—"Nay, nay, you are mistaken, Thibalt; the south is fully prepared, too," he said; "but there is a reason why we must keep these men back. If the rising is to take place here first, our friends in the south must have due notice of the day and hour, in order that we may have their immediate support, and that they may have ours. If we attack our tyrants at all points at once, they will have no defence; but each will have to guard his own castle, and to fight for his own life and lands. Now, old Thibalt, now swear to me one thing—that thou wilt act in this with me, and by me, only."

"What is the use of an oath?" said the old man, with a cynical smile: "oaths are but wind, you know, Caillet."



“ They are,” answered Caillet, “ they are, Thibalt; but we will put oath against oath. You swear to me what I require, and I will swear to you, that this day six months, if I be then living and successful, I will count out to you five hundred golden pieces, such as you have now in your hand.”

“ Will you give it in writing, will you give it in writing?” demanded the miser. “ If I get a scribe to put it down, will you make your mark thereunto?”

“ I will do better,” answered Caillet — “ I will draw it up myself—it is better than employing any scribe.”

“ Ay, I forgot, I forgot,” said the old man: “ thou canst write, which is more than many of these lords can do: they taught me not that art; but perhaps had it been otherwise, memory might not have served me so well as now she does: however, thou shalt put it down, good Caillet, thou shalt put it down. I will bring an inkhorn with me when I come again.”

“ And thou wilt swear then,” added Caillet,

“to act in this matter by my word alone, otherwise the agreement is of no avail. Mark that, my friend, and recollect such are the terms.”

“I know, I know,” he replied; “but thou shalt command, Caillet, thou shalt command in all things. — Remember, five hundred golden pieces, it was five hundred that thou saidst.”

“It was, it was,” answered Caillet; “but what is that noise before the house? Look out, look out, good Thibalt.”

“Nay, look thou out thyself,” said the old man; but ere Caillet, with a glance of scorn, could stride to the door and open it, the goatherd Morne entered in haste, and closing the creaking wood-work after him, exclaimed, “Out by the other side, Caillet, out by the other side! I have just seen a baron’s banner coming through the wood, with a long train of men-at-arms behind. They stopped and gazed about them as if they knew not the way, and we may be sure they will halt here to inquire.”

Notwithstanding the eagerness with which the swineherd spoke, Caillet paused for a moment in thought ere he followed his advice.

“There are many chances,” he said, at length, “there are many chances, that they draw no bridle here: the place looks quite deserted.”

“But the old man’s beast,” cried the swineherd sharply, “you forget that the old man’s beast is at the door.”

“True,” answered Caillet in the same calm tone, “true, that might betray us. You two stay here, then. There is no risk for you; and you, good Morne, seek me as soon as they have passed on their way: you will find me in the rugged parts of the mountain under the rocks, where there is the little well, most likely. — But here they are: I hear their horses’ feet; bid them good day for me, if they inquire, and tell them I am gone;” and thus saying, with a sneering smile, he turned away and left his two companions in the hut, making his exit by a door in the back of the building, which had been originally formed to afford an easy communication with the styes for swine, a long range of which had formerly stood close behind the cottage. Those styes, however, had long been

removed, and that part of the cottage which turned away from the road was covered with thick trees and underwood, through which a path led to some wilder and more mountainous spots in the forest, but rarely traversed by the foot of any human being.

Whether the indifference which Caillet had displayed on the approach of danger was real or assumed, and it may be very doubtful which was truly the case, it had its full effect upon his companions, who admired his calm self-possession, just in proportion as they were themselves alarmed. They had, however, some need of forethought, for the troop of those whom they looked upon as their natural enemies, was by this time at the door, and the minds of both turned instantly to devise some plausible cause, which might be assigned for their being found together in that solitary place.

“ Say that you have been pursued by a band of companions,” said Morne.

“ No, no,” cried the other, “ they would instantly set out to seek them, and find that I had lied. Nay, nay, tell them rather that I had

lost my way, and came in here to ask it of you :  
are your swine far off?"

"Some quarter of a league," replied the man; but even as he spoke, the door of the cottage opened, and a page, with his horse's bridle thrown over his left arm, broke in upon their conference.

## CHAP. VII.

“HOLLA, my masters, holla !” said the page —  
“come forth and speak to my noble lord the  
Captal de Buch.”

Morne gazed at him sullenly without reply ;  
but the old man, who in his day had seen some-  
thing both of courts and camps, replied, with a  
lowly intonation of the head, “What would the  
noble captal ? we are ever his humble slaves and  
bondmen.”

“Who have you there, Maurice ?” inquired  
the voice of the captal. “Any body who can  
give us information ?”

“One seems a dull swine enough,” replied the  
boy, with all the insolence of presumptuous  
youth, “a mere Jacques Bonhomme, but the  
other is civil. Come hither, come hither and  
speak to my lord — him who has a tongue in  
his head, I mean.”

“What would my noble lord, the renowned Captal de Buch?” demanded the old man advancing with a courtly air, which he could well assume even towards those whom he most bitterly detested.

“Simply,” replied the Captal de Buch, “to know my best way towards Clermont; for I have spent so much time needlessly by misdirection, that I would fain lose no more, if it be possible to help it: you are doubtless of this country, and can therefore afford the information that I want.”

“Good faith, my noble lord,” answered Thibalt, “I fear that I should make you but a sorry guide, for I am even now inquiring my way of this good swineherd; but from the directions he has given me, I doubt not that I can guide you to the next small village, where certainly you will find some one to conduct you onward gladly.”

The words had scarcely passed his lips, however, when the old man suddenly started and turned pale; for a personage rode up to the side of the captal from behind, whom Thibalt



had not before seen, and who gazed upon him with an inquiring and somewhat doubtful air, till at length the voice of Walleran Urgel exclaimed, "How now, old Thibalt la Rue, how now!—Do you pretend not to know the road to Clermont, you who have lived here for so many years?"

"I speak truth, noble sir, upon my word," replied the white-haired villain: "this forest puzzles and confounds me, and I was even now inquiring of my good friend the swineherd here the nearest way home."

"Pshaw, pshaw!" cried Walleran Urgel, "thou knowest the way right well, whatever it was that brought thee hither. Lead on, lead on! I remember thee of old, Thibalt."

"Ay, but it is many years since we have met, noble sir," said Thibalt, "and my memory has sadly failed me."

"Forward, without more words!" exclaimed the old man impatiently. — I beseech you, my good lord capital, let him be sent forward: he will guide us well enough if he be compelled, for it is as cunning an old slave as ever lived. There is some cause to think that to him is owing the

death of more than one noble gentleman in years long gone. He is here in the forest for no right purpose, I will warrant, and his anxiety to remain behind us does but increase suspicion. Send him on before, my lord, and believe not his tale of want of knowledge — he knows well enough whatever he will know.”

“Come, mount thy beast, old man,” cried the captał: “you see you have established no good character for truth, and therefore I must not credit your affected ignorance. Lead on then, and quickly — What wouldst thou have from me?”

As he spoke, Thibalt approached close to his horse’s side, saying, in a low tone, “I will do my best to guide you, my noble lord; but put not implicit faith in what your honourable friend tells you! You know he was always reputed somewhat wanting here,” and he laid his fingers significantly on his forehead; “some fancied injury done to his brother in days long past has made him always hate me, though I call Heaven to witness it was not I that betrayed the count: how could I?”

“ Enough, enough,” cried the capital : “ I want no defence, good man ! So that you lead me honestly on my way, that is all I have to do with thee. Mount thy beast and go on : thou shalt be rewarded for thy pains ; so now prattle no more, but be quick, for it is late in the day, and we must reach Clermont this night.”

“ Not by my help,” murmured Thibalt to himself, “ not by my help, proud capital.” He took care, however, to give no vent to such feelings, but proceeded to the side of his ass, and spent a few moments in arranging his saddle, calling upon Morne to help him, and whispering with him eagerly as he did so.

This continued so long, that the capital grew impatient, and he exclaimed, “ Come, come, no more of this, old sir, lest I ask why thou speakest below thy breath : mount thy beast, and lead on at once, or worse will befall thee. I am not one to be trifled with. Ride behind him, Hardman, and if it should turn out that his whisperings have been to evil effect, send thy spear through him. — Methinks, I never saw a less honest face,” he continued, speaking to Walleran Urgel : “ you

tell me you know him well, and that he did some evil in other days; and I can easily believe it."

"It is true, my lord capital," said Urgel, riding on beside him, "it is true, that we should never condemn without proof, and there is no absolute proof against this old man; but yet there are moral convictions beyond all evidence, which come in when our reason fails us — and how often does it do so, in every stage of our journey through life? An instinctive feeling of love or antipathy will suddenly rise up, we know not why or wherefore, and God himself will seem to point out to us, our enemies or our friends. All that is proved is that the master of that old villain trusted, confided in, consulted him, found in him much cunning, much experience, and in the end was betrayed, no one clearly knew by whom, dying without trial by the act of a brutal king: that all his relations and followers being proscribed, this man alone was suffered to enjoy wealth and freedom, and has since become a freeman, having obtained his franchise by long living in a town, protected by the very monarch who slew his master. Where his

riches come from, no one can tell, but it is known that he is wealthy; and few entertain a doubt that his wealth, like that of Judas, is the price of blood."

"The case seems very clear," replied the captal; "and we must watch him narrowly; for it is not unlikely that he may think fit, by his whisperings with that dull villain, to sell our blood, too, to any body of adventurers he may know of; and my head would certainly be prized at some gold amongst them."

"Thank God," answered the old man, "I have not yet murdered a sufficient number of my fellow-creatures to be worth the purchase. My ransom would not buy you a pair of gauntlets, captal; and yours would, at any time, enrich the families of all those that you have slain. Such is the difference, in the world's estimation, between the man of peace and the man of bloodshed."

"Nay, now, tell me," said the captal, smiling, "supposing that you were able and had the right to educate yon youth"—and he pointed to Albert Denyn—"exactly as you would—

tell me, you who cry out so much against the noble vocation of arms, what would you make him? the singer of dull canticles in the chapel of a monastery? — or the solitary teacher of some country church? — or the vain priest of some city congregation, the corrupter of citizens' wives, the hypocritical preacher of temperance and chastity, little followed by himself?"

"No, no, no!" exclaimed the old man, vehemently: "I would have him none of these things; but I would make him what knights were in other times, before bloodshed was a trade and knighthood but an office. I would make him the defender of the wronged and the oppressed; the man to whom, under God, the widow and the orphan might look up for help against tyranny: one who should shed the blood of the oppressor, but of none other, and should not lend his sword to selfish quarrels. I would make him, in short, in every thing, like the Lord of Mauvinet, except in not serving a tyrant, and fancying that he is serving his country. Such would I make him, if I had power to make, but I have no power; and

though I do believe he deserves well, and to be something better than a mere sworder, yet he must take his chance, even as the rest do, and turn out what fortune will."

The captal smiled. "In this world, my good friend," he said, "we must follow the current of the world; and all that we can do, I fear, is to take the top wave and swim above our fellows. As for that good youth, I will do the best for him that I can, the rest he must do for himself; but I doubt much, whether whatever he or I can do will make him one of those same errant knights whereof the fabliaux talk so prettily. But let us be sure this old man is leading us right. Do you, yourself, know the country?"

"Very slightly," answered Walleran Urgel, "and yet, it seems to me, he is following the road honestly enough. But see here comes a peasant on a mule: we can get tidings from him, doubtless — Look, the villain stops to talk with him himself."

The Captal de Buch touched his horse with the spur, and the animal darted forward at a



bound, bringing him up to the side of the peasant with whom Thibalt had been speaking in a moment. "What did he ask you?" demanded the captal, sternly.

"He asked me the way to Clermont, noble lord," replied the man; "he asked me nothing more."

The answer, perhaps, might have satisfied the captal, had his suspicions been only slightly awakened; but, as it was, he turned at once, sharply towards Thibalt, and detected at one glance a quiet, satisfied, sneering smile, which made him conclude, that the question he had put to the peasant had been asked merely to deceive him; and to make the story which had been told, regarding ignorance of the road, the more credible. "And which, then, is the way to Clermont?" he demanded.

"It is a long way, sir," answered the peasant; "it will be much nearer for you, noble sir, to go to St. Leu; for you will not arrive at Clermont till after midnight."

"And how far is St. Leu?" demanded the captal.

“Not above four leagues, sir,” replied the man: “it is but a little distance to St. Leu; and at the hostelrie there you will find all that any one can desire.”

“Indeed,” answered the captal, “that must be an abundant place. I have been in many a hostelrie in my life, without finding one of these much boasted lodgings, where nothing remained to be desired. However, once more lead on! We will try this hostelrie at St. Leu; for certainly midnight is somewhat too late to arrive at Clermont. — You will go with us, my good friend,” he continued, addressing Walleran Urgel: “you know that we have much to talk about.”

“We have, we have,” answered the old man: “I seek not to quit you yet, captal; for my mission is not fulfilled, and I must not leave you till it be done.”

The captal gave the signal for marching forward again, and the band, with Thibalt at its head, once more resumed its progress through the long glades of the forest.

By the side of the captal rode Walleran

Urgel; but it must be remarked that by this time his external appearance was very greatly altered. The goat-skins which had formerly enveloped him had been exchanged at the town of Mans for other garments of a kind less liable to excite remark; and he now appeared habited simply, but well, and as might become a person fitted by station to ride in company with the Captal de Buch. Nor did his air and manner belie his dress in the least, but on the contrary were still above it; and the rough men-at-arms who saw him managing his fiery horse with ease and dignity, and dressed in the clothing of a nobleman of that day, felt somewhat ashamed of the rude jests which they had poured forth when they had first beheld him, and acknowledged, that, though contorted and deformed, the old man had a princely air, and must have been brought up in no mean school of knightly graces, where such an air and movements had been communicated to a form like his.

For the rest of the way the captal and his mis-shapen companion continued in eager con-

versation; and it became clear, that, although the attendants of the English leader marked with reverence the eager and confidential tone in which their lord's conversation was carried on, and kept at some distance behind, the old man Thibalt, on the contrary, was eager to catch the words that were spoken, and for that purpose suffered his ass to lag in its pace till forced to go on. He then, pretending to have dropped something, slipped off the beast suddenly, and, ere the captal and his companion perceived him, was close to their horses' feet.

For this last act, the motive of which the dwarf seemed well to understand, Walleran Urgel struck him a sharp stroke with a willow wand which he carried in his hand, saying, "Get thee on, traitor! Thou canst hear nothing here that will profit thee. Get thee on, I say, and remember that thou art known and understood."

Thibalt made no reply, but crept forward and mounted his beast again, murmuring something to himself, the substance of which,

however, no one could distinguish. The conversation between the capital and his companion was at once resumed, and proceeded in a low tone, but with evident eagerness, on both parts. Those who came behind distinguished only three words, which were spoken by Walleran Urgel—"This very night, this very night:" but it would seem that Thibalt had heard more, for two or three times he laughed, with a low, quiet, peculiar laugh, unpleasant in its sound; and several times he muttered, "So, so—I thought so; but we will see, but we will see. Foxes bite as well as wolves; so we will see."

Low clouds covered the sky, almost to the very edge of the horizon where the autumnal sun was setting, with somewhat angry redness, when a tall steeple rising up above the trees announced that the travellers were approaching a small town or village.

"What place have we here?" demanded the capital.

"I really do not know," answered the old man, Thibalt, to whom he spoke; "but it

looks to me very much like the steeple of St. Just."

"Why, that is on the borders of Picardy," said the captal, "and many a mile beyond Clermont: how is this?"

"I told you, noble sir," replied the other, "that I had no good knowledge of the way, and it would seem that the peasant we spoke to not long ago deceived me. At all events, it is not my fault, for I forewarned you that I could not guide you right."

"There is some truth in what he says," remarked the captal, turning partly towards Walleran Urgel.

"As much truth as to season the lie more completely," was the reply; "but let us ride on, my lord captal. Heaven knows whether we shall ever discover, or shall not, the motive of his falsehood; but you may be as sure that he is acquainted with this road as well as any man now living, as that you yourself are not."

"Of that at least I am quite certain," replied the captal laughing; "but if his object be an evil one, he may find himself mistaken. We

shall surely meet with an inn here; and whether it be good or bad, we must make the best of it for the night."

The party rode on, and the little hostelry at St. Just soon received them within its ever hospitable walls. Though the chambers were not many, and the accommodation somewhat scanty, considering the numbers that now poured into the court-yard of the inn, sufficient room was found for all; and the captal, who had kept his eye upon the old man Thibalt, saw with some satisfaction that he made no effort to escape, during the hurry and bustle which succeeded their arrival, but looked carefully to the housing of his ass, and to the preparation of his own supper.

It may be well supposed that a personage of such importance as the captal monopolised a great part of the host's attention, and every thing was confusion and anxiety to provide him with all he wanted. He took care, however, to speak a word or two to one of his men, giving him manifold cautions in regard to watching the proceedings



of their guide, in regard to whose purposes he still felt some suspicion. He then went away for a few moments to see the chamber which had been prepared for him, leaving his train below. Several matters occurred to detain him longer than he had at first expected, and when he came down again he found the whole kitchen vacant, except where one or two of the servants of the inn were busily employed in laying out tables for supper, and otherwise making ready for the entertainment of himself and his followers during the evening. The rest, to say the truth, were all out in the court-yard, amusing themselves with the gambles of a monkey, except indeed Albert Denyn, who was sitting at the door of the inn with a cuirass, which he had been polishing, leaning against his knee, while his mind seemed to have reverted to other scenes and times; and an expression of deep melancholy sat upon his countenance, very different from the thoughtless gaiety which sparkled in the eyes of his companions, as the monkey sprang hither and thither at the commands of his master.

For a moment no one saw the captal; and he at length laid his hand upon Albert's arm, saying in a low tone, as if not to interrupt the sport that was going forward, "Have you seen our good friend Walleran, Albert?"

"No, my lord," cried Albert, starting up.

"Nor the old man Thibalt?" asked the captal.

"Neither, my lord," replied Albert, "but they cannot be far."

The captal shook his head with a doubtful look, and called to him the soldier whom he had charged to watch the movement of their suspected guide. The man stared, and looked confused at his lord's question; but frankly owned that his task had been forgotten, "though he felt sure," he said, "that the old man was still there."

The captal said "that he did not believe it," and it soon proved that his suspicions were just. Search was made for Thibalt, but in vain; and the captal, though he only laughed at the idea of danger, commanded his negligent follower to do penance for his forgetfulness of

orders by keeping watch in the court-yard of the inn during the first four hours of the night. The rest of the evening passed over tranquilly; and Walleran Urgel, who had gone forth for a short time to inquire if, in the neighbourhood, there was to be found one of those solitary habitations which best suited his disposition and frame of mind, returned soon after, and partook of the meal which had been prepared for the captal, though he joined not in the gaiety which reigned around the board. When the supper was over, the great leader and the old man retired, for a time, to the chamber of the English knight, and those who passed by heard them speaking long and eagerly.

They separated not till nearly midnight, and the last words of Walleran Urgel, as they did part, were, "You shall have them all—at your return, you shall have them all."

## CHAP. VIII.

ON the same night of which we have just been speaking, the sun went down red and angrily, leaving storms in the sky behind him; and the wind blew, and the rain pattered hard, amidst the branches of the forest, in which Caillet had fixed his abode. The torrent from the sky rushed in at various points, and indeed only one corner of the hut offered any thing like comfort. Amongst the hay and fern with which that corner was strewed, Caillet had cast himself down to sleep; but slumber had not yet approached his eyelids, when somebody lifted sharply the latch of the cottage.

Caillet started up and listened, doubting whether his ears deceived him; but a moment or two after, the door shook violently, and a voice exclaimed, "Caillet, Caillet! let me in: it is I, Thibalt la Rue; quick, let me in."

Caillet instantly drew back the large wooden bolt, and gave the old man admittance, though not a little surprised at such a visit and at such an hour.

“ This is, indeed, entering into the scheme eagerly, Thibalt,” he said : “ the youngest of us could not do better than this.”

“ Hush, Caillet, hush,” replied the old man : “ put to the door and listen. Surely I heard some one by the well under the hill.”

“ Your own fears, your own fears, Thibalt,” answered Caillet : “ you will find few people wandering here at this time of night, except those who have such business as you and I have ; but tell me what brings you ? ”

“ Matters of much importance,” said Thibalt, in a hurried, anxious tone, “ matters of much importance ; but listen, still listen, good Caillet.”

“ Pshaw,” answered the latter : “ if any one comes here, he leaves not the place alive.”

“ But suppose,” rejoined Thibalt, “ there should be such things as spirits, Caillet ? ”

Caillet laughed aloud. “ What, Thibalt ! ” he exclaimed, “ you with such fears ! I never

dreamt that you could believe in spirits ! Visions of old women and children, of fools and dotards ! Speak something like sense, and tell me what you dread."

"Nay, nay," answered the old man, "but I have heard, Caillet, I have heard ——"

"And so have I," interrupted Caillet scornfully, "and so have I heard, a thousand times — I have heard the priest of St. Peter's chapel swear that he had seen a whole legion of devils come whirling round the place — that he had beheld it with his own eyes ; but it was found out at length that the saint would not protect the place from such infernal visiters, unless his priest had ten golden crowns to buy a new censer, which, in reality, cost five. The old women of the parish soon provided the money, and the devils disappeared. Out upon it, Thibalt ! Speak sense, and tell me what it is that brings thee here at this time of night ; or, rather, inform me first what made you go wandering about this afternoon, through every road in the forest, as if it had been your pleasure to puzzle and perplex those you were guiding, and to lead

them round and round this spot, instead of taking them away."

The old villain answered with a low chuckle, for he was now somewhat re-assured by the presence of his companion, though, strange as it may seem, he who was restrained by no conscientious feeling, by no fear of God's retributive justice, was terrified at the idea of unearthly beings, and fully believed in their power of visiting and chastising the sins of man.

"You watched us, did you?" he demanded; "you watched us from the top of the hill, then?"

"Yes, and with no slight surprise," replied Caillet, "to find you keep them in the forest nearly till sunset, when you knew I wanted them away."

"But *I* wanted them here," he said; "I wanted them here, Caillet. I sought to detain them within reach of you, and for a reason which you shall soon hear. Think you, Caillet, that I know who is the man you hate the most on earth?"

"You mean the Lord of Mauvinet," answered Caillet; "but you are mistaken."



“It is you who are mistaken,” replied the old man. “I do not mean the Lord of Mauvinet, I speak of Albert Denyn, my good friend, the fair youth Albert Denyn; it is him you hate. Between you and the Lord of Mauvinet there can be no rivalry, between you and Albert Denyn there is. I know it all, as well as if I had seen it. Now tell me, Caillet, what would you give to injure him? What would you give to blast all his fortunes for ever, to take from him hopes and prospects of the brightest kind, and keep him in servitude and bondage all his life?”

“What would I give!” exclaimed Caillet—“I would give my right hand.”

“Ha, ha,” said the old man, “you are honest in your hatreds, however, Caillet. Well, then, now for another question; do you know who these people were that came hither to-day?”

“No,” answered the other, “I do not. Morne and you were both gone before I came down, and I have seen no one since.”

“Well, then, I will tell thee,” rejoined the

old man: "the troop was that of the Captal de Buch, and with him ——"

"Was that boy," exclaimed Caillet, interrupting him.

"Yes, he was," replied his companion; "but it was not of him I spoke—it was of another, of an old man; of one, perhaps, whom you have never beheld — deformed, contorted."

"Ah! I have seen him," answered Caillet: "long in the arms, wrapped up in goat-skins; a madman, a mere fool."

"A madman, if you will," said Thibalt, "but no fool, and without goat-skins now, though what dresses he may wear at times, he only knows. However, this man is my enemy ——"

"And therefore you would make him mine, of course," replied Caillet, blowing up the embers of the half-extinct fire, and smiling bitterly as he did so; "but you may save yourself the trouble, old Thibalt: he is my foe already. He came between me and my purposes, and that is what I pardon not, Thibalt. So that boy is here, is he? What

would I give now for one half hour face to face with him in this forest ! It were worth ten years from any other period of my life — but that is impossible — However, what is it that you would tell me ? How can you give me the means of punishing him ? ”

“ Through this old man,” answered Thibalt, “ through this old man, Caillet ; so shall we both have vengeance of our enemies ; you of yours, and I of mine ; through this dwarf you shall inflict the greatest evil, punishment — if you will — upon that boy.”

“ How — how — how ? ” demanded Caillet impetuously. “ What has he to do with Albert Denyn ? ”

“ Much, very, very, very much,” replied Thibalt. “ That cripple, that half mad, half-roguish cripple, possesses the means of raising Albert Denyn from what he is to high and noble fortunes — he will do it, too, if he be not prevented.”

“ And how can I stay him ? ” asked Caillet sullenly : “ you tell me such facts but to torment me. This man is with the Captal de

Buch, is he?—What does he with him?—How came he in the train of the captal?—How can he raise this Albert?—He, a beggarly wandering outcast!”

“I will tell thee, I will tell thee all,” replied Thibalt; “but give us a light first, I pray thee: thou sittest blowing the embers there till thou lookest like a fiend, by the glimmering glare; thou hast a torch or a lamp, or something, surely.”

Caillet made no answer; but, searching sullenly amongst the dry fern in one corner of the hut, he produced a large rosin torch, which he soon contrived to light, though the fire was low. Its red and smoky flame, however, did not serve to make the expression of his own countenance, or that of the old man, assume an appearance less fierce and terrible; and as he moved about the point of the torch amongst the ashes, he continued to murmur something concerning Albert Denyn, which showed his companion how completely he had aroused the bitter passions of his heart.

Thibalt lost not the opportunity, but, with

matchless skill, threw fresh fuel upon the flame of anger and jealousy, till Caillet turned angrily upon him, demanding, "How is it to be done? Speak at once; for, by Heaven, if you continue teasing me any longer, without telling me what you seek, I will drive you out into the forest, and leave you to the care of the spirits you talk of."

"What I mean is this," answered the old man, "that he who, with a good and unflinching blow, cleaves the skull of this same mischievous vagrant, will do more to injure Albert Denyn than were he to lop off the youth's right hand."

"But why should I not cleave the skull of Albert Denyn himself?" asked Caillet.

"That is impossible," answered Thibalt, "that is quite impossible. There is no chance of his straying from the band of the Captal de Buch; and though a wolf may snatch a lamb from amidst a flock of sheep, yet one would need to be a lion indeed to seek prey amidst such a herd as that. It cannot be, Caillet."

"Then how can the other be?" demanded his companion. "Will the mis-shapen dwarf, who

needs protection most, will he wander away, and leave the troop with whom he has already sought safety? No, no, Thibalt, none of such vain, idle schemes! I have already hazarded too much by seeking to seize opportunity ere it was ripe. Deal with him yourself; I will have nothing to do with that deed."

"I would deal with him readily," replied Thibalt, "were not good King John a captive in England; but this man, whom you hold to be a fool, has been wise enough to keep himself hid from all eyes till that danger was past. Now he comes forth, however, into sunshine, and fears not to show himself to any one. You need not fear that opportunity will be wanting. The captal leaves him here in Beauvoisis till he returns with this Albert Denyn from the north. So much have I learnt by the way; but if you let the present occasion pass, when he is near at hand, I will predict that you will see one enemy at least triumph over you."

"That he shall never," answered Caillet, "that he shall never, if I can prevent him;

and if this meddling fool must thrust himself in my way again, the consequences be upon his own head. Nevertheless, you shall tell why, and how, and wherefore — by what tie this old man is linked with Albert Denyn, and what is the source of your enmity towards him. Ay, Thibalt, to the most minute particular.”

“But listen, Caillet, listen,” cried his cunning companion, who did not seem particularly willing to enter into the causes of his hatred towards Walleran Urgel. “This old knave must die, that is clear; but can we not so manage it that his death shall seem to lie at the door of one of these lords?”

“How can that be,” demanded Caillet, “if I am to do the deed? — But I will tell thee what, Thibalt, I will kill no man secretly and in cold blood. If I meet him in the forest, he shall answer me for having crossed my path before; but I will not seek him and slay him in his sleep, as doubtless thou wouldst have.”

“Not I,” answered Thibalt. “Thou shalt meet him in the forest, and there do with him what thou wilt — ay, to-morrow morning by day-



break—but thou art so impatient! Hear me out, and let us speak low,” and bending down his head, he continued in whispered conversation with Caillet, detailing a scheme of cunning villany, to which the other listened with strange feelings, wherein stern satisfaction at the prospect of the promised vengeance was mingled with some sensations of contempt at the serpent-like art of his companion.

The result will be seen hereafter.

The morning was as dull and drizzly as the opening of any autumnal day could be, when the Captal de Buch and his party assembled in the court-yard of the inn. The hour was early, too, and the grey twilight and the greyer shower scarcely permitted the personages there gathered together to see each other's faces, as they bustled about in preparations for speedy departure. The captal himself, with his arms folded on his chest, stood watching the progress of the rest, and giving orders from time to time, till at length all was completed, the horses caparisoned and brought forth, baggage and provisions charged

upon inferior beasts of burden, and nothing, in short, wanting, but the foot in the stirrup and the hand upon the mane.

It was at that moment, when the principal squire of the captal had approached to tell him that all was ready, that the great leader, looking round, inquired, in a quiet tone, "Where is our good friend Walleran Urgel? Will he not come to bid us adieu? Ay, and that old man, too, that led us hither? Although he left us last night somewhat strangely, as yet, we have no cause to think that he has deceived or betrayed us, and I would fain give him a reward for his trouble."

"He has not been seen since last night, my lord," replied the man to whom he spoke. "I sat up to watch if he would come back, but he has not made his appearance again."

"Your fierce looks affrighted him," replied the captal, laughing. "But where is our other companion? I must needs speak one word with him before we go. — Seek him, Albert, seek him. He promised me some papers which I have not yet received. He is not wont to be a sluggard."

It was in vain that Albert Denyn sought for the old man, Walleran Urgel, throughout the house and the village. The bed in which he had lain was found vacant; the host of the little inn expressed a belief that he had gone forth, with the first ray of the morning, to visit an old hermitage in the wood hard by; and one of the horseboys declared that he had seen him speaking with somebody in the court just before the dawn of day.

“We have a long march to make,” said the capital, “and I cannot stop.” He paused, with his eyes moodily fixed on the ground for a moment, and then added, “Albert, you shall remain behind; wait for his return; receive the papers, and bring them after me to Peronne.”

Had the wishes of Albert Denyn been consulted it is probable that he would gladly have left the task to some one else; although he was now quitting his native land with none of those feelings of bounding joy which often fill the heart of youth at the aspect of new scenes and new adventures. He went not willingly, but he went resolved; and the very

pangs that he felt on parting with those he loved best on earth made him anxious to hurry forward till all was accomplished. The lingering regrets, the wishes, the hopes — all the bright things, in short, that he was leaving behind him — were to *his* eyes as one of those fairy visions in the legends of old romance which obstruct the way of the adventurous knight in the path of duty; and he longed to break through and to quit all such illusions for ever. He knew, however, that, in the present instance, there was nothing left for him but to obey; and he accordingly made no further reply to his leader than a mere demand of what he was to require at the hands of the old man, Walleran Urgel.

“He will know,” replied the captal: “if you but say the papers that he promised me, he will give them to you at once. You shall have Martin and Grandison with you to bear you company; for these are times when it does not do to ride alone.”

In the choice he had made of the two companions left with Albert Denyn, the captal had

been guided by his observation of the relationships which had sprung up in the course of the march between his young follower and his old retainers. He had perceived that the two men, Martin and Grandison, though older and more experienced soldiers than Albert Denyn, had, nevertheless, felt the influence which his superior education gave him, and willingly submitted thereunto, courting his friendship and society, while many of the other veteran troopers looked with no small jealousy upon him whom they stigmatised as their lord's new favourite.

Although the capital was too strict a commander ever to suffer idle murmurs to affect his conduct, or even to meet his ear without reproof or punishment, he took care to avoid all cause of reasonable discontent; and, in order to show both to the youth himself and the rest of his retainers, that there was a motive, independent of favour, for assigning the present task to Albert Denyn, he turned again towards his young follower, saying, "I am sure, Albert, that I can trust you as fully as even my older comrades; and, in this instance, you have

the advantage over them, of knowing something of the country between Beauvais and Peronne."

"I knew every road and path, my lord, in days of old," replied Albert Denyn; "and I do not think that I have altogether forgotten them yet, although I got bewildered in the forest yesterday. I will rejoin you, then, my lord, with all speed; but how long am I to wait?"

"If he come not soon, seek him," answered the captal; "but, at all events, set out for Peronne by to-morrow morning."

Albert Denyn promised to obey, and the great leader, who carried almost to the point of profusion the knightly virtue of liberality, took his departure, amongst the reverent salutations and commendations of his host, and all the crowd of horseboys, tapsters, and such other knaves in grain and spirit which usually collected at the door of an inn of those days, either to welcome the coming or speed the parting guest.

## CHAP. IX.

THE morning, which had opened unfavourably, made good all its promises of evil. Every moment the clouds overhead became darker, and the rain poured down in torrents; and for nearly a couple of hours after the departure of the captal and his band Albert Denyn stood under the projecting doorway of his inn, gazing out in the direction of the forest, whence he expected to see Walleran Urgel make his appearance. His two companions had often tried to engage him in conversation; but though he had replied kindly and with a smile, he had so soon fallen into thought again, that they had at length ceased their efforts, Martin saying to his fellow trooper, "Leave him, leave him, Grandison! He is just upon the edge of his own land. I recollect you blubbered like a baby at the last look of the Isle of Wight; so



he may well be somewhat sad on quitting his native country."

At the end of those two hours Albert Denyn seemed to suffer his impatience to get the better of him ; and, after cross-questioning the people of the inn once more in regard to the old man, he proposed to his two companions to set out in search of the ancient hermitage in the wood, which had been mentioned during the morning in connection with Walleran Urgel.

Movement, activity, change, enterprise, formed the life of the man-at-arms in that day. Scarcely had the suggestion passed the lips of Albert Denyn, when he and his comrades were in the saddle, and riding on towards the forest ; while three or four of the horseboys of the hostelry stood and looked after them as they went, till the tall strong figures of the three horsemen and their powerful chargers became dim and indistinct, as seen through the heavy rain, and were then lost altogether amidst the glades of the forest.

Little did the youth or his comrades care

for the weather; but onward they rode for several miles along the grassy roads which were cut through the wood, with the water splashing up under their horses' feet from the well-soaked ground; till at length Albert, whose eyes were bent forward with a kind of apprehensive feeling which he could not account for, exclaimed, "What is that on there before us, Grandison? It looks like the body of a man lying with the feet among the bushes."

Before his companion could bring his eyes to the spot, or make any reply, the youth had spurred forward, and ascertained that his worst apprehensions were right. The corpse of Walleran Urgel lay before him, whilst the moist ground near the spot was marked with thick pools of blood. Albert sprang from his horse, and raised the head of the unfortunate old man, gazing on his face, in the hope of seeing some signs of animation left. All was still and calm, however — all was ashy pale, except where, from a deep gash upon the brow, a stream of red blood had run across the forehead, and dabbled the long grey hair.

“Who can have done this?” exclaimed Martin, riding up, and gazing with a degree of horror upon the bloody countenance of the old man, which he had never felt at the sight of death’s ghastly image written in the same red characters upon youth or lusty manhood. “Who can have done this?”

“I know not,” answered Albert Denyn sadly; “but it was a brutal and a savage act. — God forgive me if I am unchristian-like; but I know not why, my mind turns to William Caillet. He has already proved himself base enough; and were he in Beauvoisis, I should say *he* had done this deed. Poor old man,” continued Albert; “it is strange what feelings I have experienced towards him, and could I discover his murderer I would have blood for blood. Where can we carry the body to, I wonder? — The castle of St. Leu cannot be far; and it were well to seek assistance there. Perhaps, after all, life may not be extinct. My own good lord lay for many hours among the dead at Poitiers. You two, Martin and Grandison, go on for a mile or two along this

road. Through some of the gaps you will soon see the tall grey towers of an old castle, rising upon a hill. You will find a leech there: bring him down with you. I will wait here to keep the wolves from the body."

"No, no!" exclaimed the man called Grandison. "You know the country better than we do, Albert. Go on with Martin; I will stay with the corpse."

As he spoke he dismounted, and Albert, again springing on his horse, led the way in search of the château of St. Leu, which he was not long in discovering.

In the mean while Grandison stood by the side of the body with his horse's bridle over his arm. At first he gazed upon it with those grave and sombre feelings which the solitary presence of death naturally produces even in the mind of the rude and uncultivated. Who can stand and contemplate the deserted habitation of the immortal soul, without asking himself strange and moving questions regarding the mysterious link between spirit and matter, regarding all the warm relationships of life, and all the cold

corruption of the tomb, regarding the final state of both the mortal and immortal parts of our mixed nature? Who, in short, is there who can so look upon death without applying the sight before him to his own heart, without employing the dark hieroglyphic as a key to read something of his own destiny?

Such feelings were, indeed, in a degree, present in the breast of the stout trooper as he stood beside the dead; but his was not a character to encourage or analyse them. Even as he gazed in musing meditation he began to whistle a light air, and soon turned his eyes away, looking up and down the road, and every now and then mingling an articulate word or two of the song with the tune which poured from his compressed lips: —

“ The hooded crow, the hooded crow,  
Sat on the tree by the river side,  
And up and down, the boat did row,  
As the lover sat by the lady’s side.”

So sang Grandison, and then broke off and whistled some more bars of the air: —

“ The lover sat by the lady’s side,  
And much he talk’d of love’s soft law,  
And nobody heard what the dame replied ;  
But the hooded crow still answer’d, ‘ Caw.’ ”

And again he whistled.

“ The boat glided down the river’s course,  
And the lovers were gay as gay could be ;  
But the hooded crow, with his accents hoarse,  
Followed them still from tree to tree.

“ The boat glided quick o’er the glassy wave,  
To where the waterfall broke the flood ;  
And, at night, the lovers were still as the grave ;  
But the hooded crow was there at his food.”

And once more Grandison whistled, and began to march up and down as if on duty at an outpost.

His music, however, was soon interrupted by various discordant shouts coming apparently from one of the side alleys of the wood which he and his companions had passed in their advance.

“ Ay, here they come,” said he, thinking that Albert and Martin were bringing down some assistance from the castle ; but a few moments showed him a party of country people, comprising a number of boys, advancing upon

him with furious cries and gesticulations, and evidently regarding him with feelings of enmity and wrath. His surprise, which was not slight, increased when they came near, on hearing nine or ten voices accuse him loudly of the murder of the old man !

As soon as he found that such was the case, however, Grandison sprang into the saddle and grasped his lance, exclaiming, " Keep off, my men ; keep off ! You are all fools ; but, if your folly brings you too near me, you may get a broken head."

" Seize upon him, seize upon him," cried an old man advancing from the crowd, in whom Grandison recognised their somewhat doubtful guide of the day before : " but there were more of them," he continued. " I saw them with my own eyes. But seize upon this one, at least, even though the others have escaped."

How the matter might have ended, had Grandison been left alone to deal with the undisciplined mob that surrounded him, cannot, of course, be told. It is very probable that they might have made good their object,



yet not impossible that the stout man-at-arms might have drubbed them all; but, in the midst of the outcry, the sound of galloping horse was heard; and, to the good trooper's great satisfaction, his companion Martin and Albert Denyn were seen coming down the green road at full speed, accompanied by a considerable body of horsemen. At Albert Denyn's right hand was a noble-looking man, considerably past the middle age, whom Grandison had never beheld before; but whose name he soon learned from the exclamations of the people, who shouted as soon as they beheld him, "The Lord of St. Leu! the Lord of St. Leu!"

As the party came near, the nobleman advanced more rapidly than the rest, exclaiming, "What is all this! Why do you attack the trooper, my friends? Stand back there, I say! — By the Lord, Jacques Bonhomme, I will teach you to hear!" and he struck a young peasant who was pressing forward upon Grandison a blow with his clenched fist, which levelled him to the ground. The young man

rose cowed, but sullen, while one of the others exclaimed in a humble tone, "Here has been a terrible murder, my lord, and we only sought to seize the murderer, and bring him up to the castle."

"That's the man! that's the man!" cried another voice.

"But there were two others, there were two others," shouted a third from the crowd. "Thibalt saw them, Thibalt saw them," said a fourth.

"*Who* saw them?" exclaimed the Lord of St. Leu. "Who do you say?"

"Old Thibalt, my noble lord; old Thibalt la Rue," cried the man who had last spoken.

"He saw it, did he?" demanded the Lord of St. Leu in return. "That is important evidence. Stand forward, old Thibalt. — Nay, sneak not away out behind. Come forward, I say. They call you 'cunning Thibalt,' I think. Now, let me see whether you can be honest Thibalt, and give me a straightforward answer. You saw the people that murdered this poor old man. Now, point

out to me, if you see them here, any of the persons concerned in the deed."

Thibalt was evidently disinclined to give his personal testimony before the Lord of St. Leu. He hesitated; he stammered: he was quite sure, he said, of Grandison being one of the murderers, and he then pointed to Albert Denyn and Martin as the two others.

"And you saw them commit the murder?" rejoined the Lord of St. Leu, waving his hand for Martin to hold his peace.

"Not exactly commit the murder, my good and noble lord," replied the old man in a low and humble tone; "but I saw them near the place."

"But when? but when?" exclaimed the Lord of St. Leu sharply. "I see them near the place too, and I see *you* there; but that is no proof that either you or they committed the murder. When did you first behold them near the place?"

"About two hours ago, my good lord," replied Thibalt, "just at the time I heard the old man's cries for help."

“And so you were two whole hours,” said the Lord of St. Leu, “before you brought the help for which he cried.”

“My lord, I could not get the people together sooner,” answered the old man.

“Why came you not to the castle?” demanded the Lord of St. Leu fiercely. “Why went you not to the village?—Take him, Bertrand and Hugh. Bind his arms tight, and away with him to the château of Monsieur de Plessy; for it is on his lands he lives. Tell him what has happened, and what you have heard. He will easily perceive that this old fox evidently knows more of the murder than he will admit. You can say, too, that I know his charge against these men to be false; for that, hearing there was an armed party in the village, and not being aware that it was the train of the noble Captal de Buch, I sent down to watch all its movements.—Yet, stay; this old man is reputed rich, is not he?”

“Oh, that he is! that he is!” cried a dozen voices from the peasantry around.

“Then I will deal with him myself,” said

the Lord of St. Leu dryly ; “ take him to the castle. Has not the leech come down yet ? — But the old man is evidently dead.”

“ I see the leech at the end of the alley, my noble lord,” said one of the retainers. “ He seems to put no great faith in his own powers, he is coming so slow.”

“ Who can have done this deed ?” continued the Lord of St. Leu, gazing on the body, while two of his attendants carried off the old man Thibalt, with a pale face, towards the château of St. Leu.

“ Have you no idea ? Can you form no suspicion, good youth ?” he continued, addressing Albert Denyn. “ You say that the murdered man accompanied the capital’s train out of Touraine. Is there any one on whom your suspicions would turn ?”

“ I know no one, my good lord,” replied Albert, “ in this part of the world, who could have any motive for such a bloody act. That old man, Thibalt, indeed, seemed to have known him in days of yore, and referred to some enmity between them. But, then, such

feeble hands as his could not have done this deed. There was one other, indeed, whose enmity this poor gentleman had provoked; but he must be far absent.—Were he here, I should say he was the man who did it.”

“Name him! name him!” said the Lord of St. Leu, in his usual quick and stern manner.

“He means that scoundrel William Caillet!” exclaimed Martin. “A serf, my good lord, who tried ——”

“I know, I know!” rejoined the Lord of St. Leu. “My good friend the Count de Mauvinet sent me a messenger to tell me all, and bid me keep a strict watch in Beauvoisis, lest this base villain should seek refuge in these parts.—So,” he continued, turning to Albert Denyn, “you judge that, were he here, we might reasonably suspect him of the murder of this old man?”

“I do, my lord, I do,” replied Albert boldly. “Poor Walleran Urgel crossed him in his purposes, and by his timely coming saved my noble lord’s daughter from the brutal violence of that very Caillet. It was an act which he

would not soon forgive, and were he in Beauvoisis, I should believe he is the man who has done this."

"He is in Beauvoisis," said the Lord of St. Leu, with a dark smile. "I have certain information that he is here. Not many a mile distant from this very spot, he has been seen twice by those who know him well; and, even now, my people are watching for him, that he may not escape the punishment of his offences. Doubtless we shall soon discover whether this crime also is to be added to the number. What say you, leech; is the man dead?"

The surgeon, who had been brought down from the castle, and who, during the few last words spoken by the Lord of St. Leu, had been examining carefully the body of Walleran Urgel, now raised his head to reply, with a look of great gravity and sagacity. "My lord," he answered, "it is a very difficult thing to say what is death, and what is not."

"Pshaw!" cried the Lord of St. Leu; "I ask you will that man ever get up from that grass, and walk?"



“Not till the day of judgment,” replied the leech.

“Then the man is dead!” exclaimed the Lord of St. Leu. — “Out upon philosophy! It is *truth* I want. Take up the body and carry it to the castle. You, too, good youth, and your companions, had better speed on at once after the noble Captal de Buch, as he left you to look for this old man, to whom you can now render no farther service. Tell him what has happened, and say that, if he wishes to investigate the matter himself, a hearty welcome awaits him at St. Leu.”

“But, my lord,” replied Albert Denyn, “the object of our stay was to obtain some papers which this poor gentleman had promised to my good lord the captal.”

“Let the body be searched,” interrupted the Lord of St. Leu. “Let the body be searched; so that you can make your own report, youth, to your lord.”

The corpse was searched accordingly; but nothing of any kind was found amongst the clothes; and Albert Denyn, satisfied that poor

Walleran Urgel had been plundered as well as murdered, took his leave of the Lord of St. Leu, and, according to the directions he had received, rode on to rejoin the capital.

The body of Walleran Urgel was raised by the attendants of the Lord of St. Leu, and carried towards the castle, while some of the peasantry followed the nobleman and his train, as they rode slowly back, and the rest remained gathered together round the spot, discussing the events that had taken place, and secretly declaring among themselves that the real murderers had been suffered to depart, and the crime, in order to shield them, had been attributed to those who had nothing to do with it. Such were the suspicions whispered amongst the crowd; but there was one who ventured to go farther than any of his comrades. The young peasant, whom the Lord of St. Leu had somewhat brutally struck down, clenched his fist tight as he saw the nobleman and his train depart, and muttered between his teeth, "The time will come."

## CHAP. X.

SOME time had passed; the weather had cleared up again; the heavens were soft and bright; the sun shone out; and, though there was a light winter's mist lying in the low grounds, it scarcely interrupted the eye that ran over the scene around, but only served to soften the principal features of the landscape, and to give a vague vastness of the whole, by blending the distance insensibly with the sky.

Upon one of the highest hills in that part of the country, which, though not mountainous, is — as the reader well knows — rich in graceful undulations, stood a small chapel, with a cottage, tenanted by the officiating priest, hard by. It was reached by a winding path issuing from the deep woods below; but the chapel itself stood bare upon a little esplanade, overtopping every thing around it; and high above the little belfry appeared the symbol of man's sal-

vation, at the foot of which lay the old emblem of an anchor, meaning, perhaps, to represent Faith arising out of Hope.

On the day we speak of, various groups of peasantry were seen winding up the tortuous road. They consisted almost altogether of men—hard-featured, gaunt, hollow-eyed peasants—on whose faces as well as on whose garments appeared sad signs of misery and want, labour, exposure, and distress. Such traces were common to the countenances of all; but every different shade of expression was there besides, and, by the aspect, one might see how each man bore his burden. There was the downcast eager gaze upon the ground, which seemed despairingly to ask the stones for bread. There was the gay and laughing misery which sets despondency at defiance. There was the calm firm look of resolute endurance. There was the wild, yet sullen stare of fierce discontent, seeking the object of its hatred from under the bent eyebrows. Some of them spoke together as they came; some of them chattered quickly and gesticulated vehemently; some advanced in deep

silence, buried, apparently, in the thoughts of their own sorrow. The object of all, however, was the same. A whisper had gone through the miserable peasantry in the neighbourhood of Claremont, Beauvais, and St. Leu, that a meeting of some of those who suffered most severely under the horrors and privations of the time was to take place, for the purpose of bewailing their misery and praying to God in that chapel for some alleviation of the load which had fallen upon them. With whom the rumour originated no one appeared to know, but it seemed to have been universal through the country, and the day and the hour had been named exactly to every one. No one had been summoned — no one had been called — but all had heard that such a meeting was to be held, and all went to join their sorrows to those of men who suffered like themselves.

The good old priest had not been made aware that any such assembly was proposed, though the poor of the neighbourhood had often asked him to petition God for some relief, and the worthy man had never failed to do so, both

in his secret orisons, and in the public service of the chapel. He was not a little surprised, then, to see from his windows, about the hour of mass, so great a number of the peasantry approaching his lonely habitation ; for his ordinary congregation amounted rarely to more than twenty or thirty, and now two or three hundred men were evidently climbing the hills.

“ Poor people,” he said to himself ; “ poor people, their misery brings them to God. A sad pity is it that gratitude for happiness is not as strong a motive as terror or expectation ; but so it is with our earthly nature. We must be driven, rather than led. We need the scourge of sorrow, and forget the Almighty too soon in the very prosperity which he has given.”

Thus saying, he hastened into the chapel, which soon overflowed with people, and the mass began, and proceeded reverently to a close. In a prayer to God — introduced perhaps somewhat irregularly — the priest spoke of the sorrows of the peasantry of France, of the misery which they had so long endured, of the scourges of all kinds under which they suffered, and he besought some speedy and effectual relief.

The multitude listened to the prayer ; but, if the ordinary service of the mass had soothed and consoled them, the mention of their disastrous situation seemed to revive all their anguish ; and when they quitted the chapel, and had assembled on the little esplanade which we have mentioned, their minds were full of their wretchedness, and many real and many fancied causes of discontent were busy in their imaginations.

As they issued forth, they broke into separate groups, according as they found friends or acquaintances, and each little knot went on to detail griefs and privations enough to make the heart sick and the blood run cold. Gradually, however, the more angry and vehement speakers drew the attention of listeners from the groups around. The whole numbers collected were speedily gathered into three or four parties. The voice of lamentation and sorrow was changed into complaint and murmuring, and curses deep and strong against the oppressors burst from the lips of the oppressed.

The good priest had mingled with them



to soothe and to console ; but, when he heard the turn which the people's words were taking, he endeavoured to pacify and to calm, and even ventured upon expostulation and reproof. He showed that many of the statements of wrongs suffered were as false as the miseries endured were true ; and he was endeavouring to prove that some of the charges brought against the nobles were unfounded, when a loud voice proceeding from a man who had not yet spoken, stopped him in the midst.

“ Get thee hence,” said a tall peasant covered from head to foot with the grey cloak of a shepherd, the hood of which had hung far over his face, concealing the features from view. “ Get thee hence, good priest ! This is no moment for thee ; thou art a man of peace, and hast done thy mission. — Get thee hence, I say. — But who is this riding so fast up the hill ? The bailiff of the Lord of St. Leu, with one of his archers, come to say that we shall not even tell our miseries to God, I suppose.”

All eyes were now turned in the direction of

the road; on which was seen approaching a stout, well-fed, portly-looking man on horse-back, followed by an archer on foot; the latter, besides his usual arms, bore a partisan on his shoulder, and as far as beard and ugliness went, he was as forbidding a personage, and bore as formidable an appearance, as can well be conceived. Nor was the countenance of the bailiff of the Lord of St. Leu very prepossessing; not that the features were in themselves bad, but there was withal a look of insolent and domineering pride, a fat scorn for all things more miserable and meagre than himself, which certainly was not at all calculated to conciliate the affection of the starving peasantry of the neighbourhood. Thus, as he rode up, many a murmured comment on his insolent tyranny passed through the people, who watched his approach.

Such are the men who make their lords hated; for very, very often the detestation of their inferiors falls upon persons in high station, without any actual oppression on their own part. Nevertheless, let them not think

themselves ill-treated if the acts of their agents draw down upon their head the enmity of those whom they have not themselves trampled on; for power and wealth bring with them a great responsibility, and demand at our hands a watchfulness over the conduct of others as well as our own; so that the man whose servant uses his authority for the purpose of oppression is little less culpable than the oppressor himself.

The Lord of St. Leu, as times went, was neither a tyrant nor an unjust man: his morality was not very strict; and in cases of offences committed within his jurisdiction, though he certainly did not suffer the guilty to escape, yet he contrived, when it was possible, to make the punishment profitable to himself. He was fonder, in short, of fines than of bloodshed, and preferred making a culprit pay in pocket rather than in person. To a certain degree he was kind to the poor, often supplied them with food, and commiserated their distresses; but he was quick and severe when opposed, and stern in his general demeanour. His greatest

crime was the licence which he allowed his inferior officers, who committed many a wrong, and many a cruelty, without his knowledge, but it cannot be said, without his fault.

Amongst the most detested of these subordinate tyrants was the bailiff of St. Leu; not that he was more cruel than others, but that he was more insolent in his cruelty, for people will bear tyranny more easily than scorn; and the secret why some of the greatest tyrants that ever lived have gone on to the end of their lives uninjured and unopposed, has generally been that they gained to their side the vanity of those whom they oppressed, rather than arrayed it against them.

The peasantry assembled before the chapel on the top of the hill drew back on either side as the bailiff advanced, but without showing any disposition to fly; and, indeed, had he examined closely, he might have seen some cause for apprehension in the sullen looks of some, and the fierce, wild expression of others. In those days, however, the idea of

any thing like resistance on the part of the serfs had never entered into the mind of the nobles of France. They regarded the villeins, as they called them, as the mere creatures of their will. If they treated them well, it was merely from general kindness of heart and natural good feeling; if they abstained from oppressing and actually ill-using them, when they had any inclination so to do, it was simply on account of some respect for the few laws which gave them a scanty protection; but no idea that the worm might turn on him who trampled it ever entered into the calculation of the lords of the soil. A terrible day of retribution, however, was now coming, and the bailiff of the Lord of St. Leu was the one to hurry it on.

“How now, Jacques Bonhommes,” he exclaimed, “what are you doing here in such a crowd? Why get ye not to your labour? What are ye doing here in idleness?”

“We have been praying God to deliver us from evil,” replied a voice from the crowd.

“Away with you! away with you!” cried

the insolent officer; "think you that God will attend to such scum as you are?—But first let me see who you have got amongst you; march down that road, every man of you, one by one."

"Why should we do that?" demanded one of the boldest amongst the peasantry, "or why should you meddle with us, when we are praying to the only ear that will hear us?"

"Insolent villain!" exclaimed the bailiff, striking him a slight blow with a truncheon he carried in his hand. "Dare you put questions to me?"

The man drew back with a frowning brow, but made no reply; and the bailiff continued, "I will answer you, however. — Here, archer, take my horse;" and throwing the rein to his follower, he slowly dismounted from his horse, while a little group at the other side of the crowd were seen eagerly conversing together.

"Now, then," said the bailiff, "pass on before me, one by one; for there is a criminal amongst you who, having first committed felony against his lord, has fled hither to add murder to his

other crimes. You all know him well, and his name is William Caillet. Come, quick, pass before me, one by one, and each man let me see his face as he goes by."

The people paused and hesitated; but, at that moment, the person who had spoken to the priest, and who was, as we have said, covered from head to foot with a grey shepherd's cloak and hood, advanced slowly and deliberately from the other side of the crowd, as if to lead the way in passing before the bailiff of St. Leu. Several others of those who were near followed close behind him; and when he approached the place where the officer stood, the bailiff, although there was something in the man's demeanour which evidently struck and disconcerted him, exclaimed, aloud, "Come, come, throw back your hood!"

The peasant made no reply, but took another step forward, and then turning suddenly face to face with the bailiff, he threw the cloak off entirely, and stood out before the eyes of all, the very William Caillet whom the officer had demanded.



“ Now, what want you with me ? ” demanded Caillet.

“ To apprehend you for a felony,” replied the officer, boldly.

“ Then take that for thy pains,” exclaimed Caillet, striking him a blow in the face, which made him reel back. “ Cut-throat slave of a bloody tyrant, take that — and that — and that ! ” and, drawing the sword with which he was armed, he plunged it again and again into the body of the bailiff, before the unhappy man, taken by surprise, had power to do more than grasp the hilt of his sword convulsively. Ere he could pluck it from the sheath, his spirit had fled for ever, and, almost at the same instant, the peasant, called Jacques Morne, had sprung upon the archer, exclaiming, —

“ Tear him to pieces ! Down with the monster ! Down with the nobles, and all the bloody tyrants who keep us without bread ! ”

The archer, however, was more upon his guard than his officer had been, and, shortening his partisan, he struck Morne a blow upon the head, which, though it did not kill him,

laid him bleeding and senseless at his feet. Ere he could do more, Caillet, seeing that the bailiff could offer no further resistance to any one, turned also to the archer, and strode over the prostrate body of Morne. The soldier aimed a fierce stroke at him likewise ; but Caillet was far superior to him both in skill and strength, and, parrying it, in a moment he struck him a blow upon the shoulder, which would have cleft him to the waist had he not been protected by his brigandine. Notwithstanding that defence, it wounded him severely, and brought him, at once, upon his knees : but Caillet drew back, with a scornful smile ; and exclaiming to the peasants, " If he ever rise again, it is your fault," he thrust his sword back into the sheath.

The people rushed upon the unfortunate man in a crowd, bore him down to the earth ; and in a moment they had literally torn him to pieces.

The priest placed his hands over his eyes for an instant, to shut out the dreadful sight ; but, taking them away again, he raised them

up to heaven, exclaiming, "Oh, man of blood, man of blood, you have brought down a new curse upon the land!"

"I have brought it deliverance," cried Caillet, in his voice of thunder. "Get thee to prayers, good priest; get thee to prayers. Pray unto God for his blessing upon the course which has been begun this day: pray for strength to those arms that are now raised to deliver their country: pray for resolution to those hearts which have undertaken the great work of restoring to mankind the liberty which is man's birthright!"

The few words which had passed between the priest and Caillet had afforded the people time to think for a moment over the act which had just been done, or rather to see clearly the situation in which they had so suddenly been placed; and strange and terrible were the contending sensations excited in their bosoms. The long habit of submission and fear of their lords had given way, for an instant, to the impulse of momentary passion; but as soon as the deed, to which the passion had

prompted, was accomplished, the feeling of awe returned, and with it the terror of punishment. They recoiled in a mass from the mangled body of the archer; and they gazed with feelings of horror and affright on the bloody work they had made.

Quick, however, to catch and take advantage of the passing feelings of the moment, Caillet perceived, at once, what was passing in the minds of the peasantry: he saw that apprehension of their lord's vengeance was, for the time, uppermost, and he determined to use that very apprehension to counteract its natural effects. He looked on them sternly, then, for a short space, while they turned their eyes from the dead bodies towards him, —

“ See what you have done,” he said, in a voice which was heard by every one present; “ see what you have done. You have slain one of the Lord of St. Leu's archers. You have torn him to pieces. You cannot hide the deed, for too many have witnessed it. You cannot justify it, for he will hear no justification: he will neither pardon nor spare. To-morrow,

his men-at-arms and his archers will be amongst you ; and there is not a man here, but myself, who will not be hanging up to some of the oak trees of the forest, before sunset to-morrow night. You have done a terrible and unheard-of thing : a thing that was never known in France before. It is true, you have been goaded to desperation ; it is true, you have been trampled on, and misused, and ground to the dust ; it is true, you have been kept in starvation and misery by men no better than yourselves ; it is true, you have seen your wives and children die of want and cold, that your lives have been one endless sorrow, and your existence but a length of drudgery and pain ; it is true, that human patience could endure no more ; that the insolence of your tyrants added insult, and scorn, and contempt, and cruelty to wretchedness, and penury, and affliction ! But will your persecutors spare you on that account ? Will they have pity, because you were driven by wrongs that no creatures on the earth could bear, under which a timid hare would find courage, against which a worm would turn ?

Oh, no, no ! deceive yourselves not, my friends ; they will neither spare nor forgive. They know the interests of their own tyranny too well ; they know that, if once you find resistance in any case successful, you will regain your rights and liberties — that you will take back, with a strong hand, that of which they have robbed you ; that their fine castles, and glorious lands, and rich furniture, and dainty food, will all be yours ; that you will no longer consent to be oppressed and trampled on ; that the rod with which they have ruled you is broken, and their power gone for ever. They know it, I say, they know it ; and why do they know it ? because they know that you are many, and they are few ; that you are strong by endurance and labour, and that they are weak ; that you are brave, and that they are cowardly ; ay, cowardly I say. See how a handful of the English scattered their millions like a flock of sheep at Poitiers. See how a few bands of adventurers ravage the land without their daring to oppose them. So would you scatter them if you chose it ; so may you ravage their lands, if you do not

prefer to submit your necks to the halter, and pay for the death of yon minion of tyranny with your lives. To them, to them alone, is attributable all the evils which we endure — first to their oppression, then to their folly, then to their cowardice. Will you stand tamely, and bend your heads to the blood-thirsty monsters who have devoured you, or will you boldly follow me to punish them for their misdeeds? to burn their castles, to ravage their lands, to smite the smiter, and to feed upon the fruits that they have torn from you?”

“ We will ! we will ! ” cried Jacques Morne ; and, excited to a pitch of wild enthusiasm such as they had never before felt, by the vehement oratory of Caillet, a number of the peasants echoed, “ We will ! we will ! ”

“ Will you follow me,” reiterated Caillet, “ to avenge the wrongs that you have suffered, and to taste all the pleasures that have been denied to you ? Will you follow me to wipe out in blood and flame the memory of long years of suffering and oppression ? Choose your course, and choose at once ; and think not that I try to



lead you to violence in order to shield my own head, for there is not a man here who is not even now in greater danger than I am. I have known how to protect myself, and I can protect myself still, against all the lords in the land. They cannot hurt me, they can do me no harm; but I ask you, Is there one man here, after what you have done to-day, who can ever lay down his head in safety? Are you not aware that the rope is round your necks? Are you not aware that it must be your own hands and your own knives that cut it?"

"We are! we are!" exclaimed a hundred voices round; "we will follow you, we will follow you to death."

"No, not to death," cried Caillet, in an exulting tone; "to life! to liberty! to enjoyment! to revenge! to every thing that man can hope for and desire! Oh, thou bloody spectacle!" he continued, addressing the dead body at his foot, "I thank thee! for the sight of thee has roused my country to shake off the chains that bound her! I thank thee! for the

sight of thee has given back to my countrymen their hearts of lions. Let us spend no more time in vain words. I, long ago, my men, and you, this day, have done deeds that bar us from all retreat. We must conquer our liberty or die. Let us strike, then, at once; let us this very hour perform some other great act which may fill the hearts of our enemies with fear."

"But," said one of those timid counsellors who so often, in moments of excitement and enthusiasm, throw a damp upon the brightest ardour, "but we are here not more than two hundred men, without arms, without assistance."

"But two hundred men!" exclaimed Caillet with a frowning brow and a loud voice; "I tell you that, by my voice, speak all the peasantry of France. I tell you that the castle which I will set in flames this night — ay, though it be perched upon a rock, and defended by triple walls — the castle which I will set on fire this night, shall serve but as a beacon to call forth the millions of the nation to join with us in punishing their oppressors. No arms, did the .

man say? Have you not knives — have you not the knives with which the commons of France have more than once routed the enemies of their land? Have you not scythes, weapons more terrible than all the lances of your enemies? Let each man seize his scythe, then, and follow me; I will teach him to mow down harvests which he has never reaped before. Take such arms as are nearest at hand, for the time being! and we will soon snatch from the hands of our enemies the swords they have too long used against ourselves. No assistance did he say? I tell you, you shall have the best assistance in the world; you, the peasantry of France, shall be aided by all the citizens of France. The people of Paris are already in revolt, and the commons of every other town only wait our signal to rise as one man. Then, then a few thousand nobles, cooped up in their strong-holds, and besieged by millions of their injured countrymen, shall pay the penalty of their long and terrible crimes, washing out in blood the stains they have fixed upon the land; and may destruction

fall upon them all, except such as frankly come over and join the people. Now, then, let those who will, follow me ! for we have already wasted much time ; and this night you shall have the first taste of that glorious revenge of which you shall drink deep day by day, till the whole be accomplished. But, if there be one man amongst you who has not been injured by these nobles — if there be one man whose children have been suffered to know plenty, or one even who thinks that, after the death of that archer, we can obtain peace and forgiveness, let him stay away, and take part with those whom we devote to destruction. We want none but such as have willing hearts and ready hands ; for the multitudes throughout all France that are prepared to join us — the thousands that I have seen on the banks of the Loire, cursing and scoffing at the coward nobles as they fled from Poitiers, will put all resistance at defiance, and in a few days make us masters of the country. — Whither shall we go ? — what place shall we first attack ? — Let it be the castle of St. Leu : it is strong and full of men, and will be a glorious conquest.

There, too, is confined good old Thibalt la Rue, whom they have accused of a murder that he did not commit, simply because they knew he wished the people to rise and throw off their tyranny."

"No, no !" cried a voice ; "he is not there : they moved him from St. Leu nearly a fortnight ago, and took him to Plessy en Val, because he lived upon those lands. He is in the tower of the Lord of Plessy, by the stream."

"Let us go thither, then," exclaimed Caillet ; "that will be an easy conquest, and perhaps we may have time to take the castle of St. Leu also before night."

Every strong feeling of the human heart is more or less infectious ; and, unless guarded against its influence by some counteracting passion in our own bosom, we can hardly help participating in any sensation which we see powerfully displayed by another. Every word, every look, every gesture of Caillet was full of strength, and confidence, and determination ; and there was not one person, in the crowd that surrounded him, who did not feel his own

energies rise, his own fears decrease, his own courage glow, as he listened to and marked the extraordinary man who stood before him. Even the cold counsellor, who had been the first to think of difficulties and impediments, was carried away by the words he heard, and exclaimed with the rest, "Lead on, lead on! We will follow you."

"Forward, then," exclaimed Caillet; "forward towards Plessy, and, as we go, let us call out our fellow-men to aid us in our enterprise."

Thus saying, he led the way down the hill with a rapid step. The crowd followed him to a man; and no one but the good old priest gazed after them, as they rushed away into the paths of the forest.

## CHAP. XI.

THERE was a man singing at his work, and two or three children playing about the door, while a mother sat within rocking a wicker cradle with her foot, and twirling the busy distaff with her hands, in the little village of peasants' huts which lay at the distance of about a mile from the tower of Plessy en Val. The short afternoon was drawing towards its close, and the evening light of a bright day in the beginning of the year shone calm upon the peaceful scene, the woods swept up over the neighbouring hills, the tall donjon of the castle was seen rising over the trees, and there was a sort of misty calmness in the aspect of all things, which communicated a sweet and tranquil feeling to the mind.

Merrily worked on the contented labourer, watching the gambols of his babes, and speaking from time to time a word to his wife within.



Suddenly some unusual sound caused the man to look up and turn towards the road which came out of the wood. The noise was a very peculiar one: neither cry, nor shout, nor human voice was heard; but there was the quick tramp of many feet, blended with the buzz of a number of people speaking in a low tone.

“What is all this?” said the peasant, raising himself to his full height, and leaning on the axe with which he had been hewing into shape a large mass of oak. “What is all this, Janette? Here’s a crowd of several hundred men coming down, as fast as they can come without running, a number of the good folks of St. Leu I see, and some of the people from Beauvais; there is Jacques Morne too, and long Phillipe of Argenton, and some of the serfs of Beaulieu; but who is that at their head with a sword in his hand? On my life I believe it is the felon, William Caillet! They must be about some mischief.”

A minute more brought the first men of the crowd to the entrance of the village, and the loud voice of Caillet exclaimed in a tone of

command, "Take your axe on your shoulder, and join us to deliver France from her tyrants!"

"I beg your pardon, Master Caillet," replied the man to whom he had addressed himself; "I never join people without knowing what they are going to be about."

"To deliver France, I tell you," answered Caillet sternly.

"Ay, ay," cried the peasant; "but how? — How are you going to begin?"

"By burning down the castle of Plessy, and setting free good old Thibalt la Rue," growled forth Jacques Morne. "Waste not many words upon him, Caillet: I told you all the people here are willing slaves."

"I am an honest man, at all events," replied the peasant boldly, "and I will have no hand in burning down the castle of my good lord, or setting free an old rogue who never left us at peace while he was amongst us. — Think what you are about, my men," he continued, addressing the followers of Caillet. "Think what you are about, and where these people are leading you."

"Take that for your pains," cried Jacques

Morne, plunging a knife into his throat; and as the unfortunate man fell back, weltering in his blood, Caillet exclaimed, "So die all the willing slaves of the tyrants of our country! Disperse through the houses; gather all the arms and the tools that you can get, and let us on as fast as possible."

In a moment every cabin was invaded, and a general pillage began; some men were found in the houses who willingly joined the insurgents, some, it may be supposed, followed the example of the peasant whom the insurgents had first met, and more than once a scream, or a deep groan, or a supplication for mercy, issued from the doors of the huts, telling how well the orders which had been given were obeyed. When the crowd again began to move on, flames were bursting from various parts of the village, and a few women and children were seen flying in terror and agony towards the woods. It required but five minutes to change a sweet and peaceful place into a scene of blood and devastation.

Caillet himself had entered none of the houses, but stood for a short time in the midst

of the road, with his right hand still grasping his naked sword, and his left pressed tight upon his brow. At length he shouted to his followers to come forth; and as they obeyed that loud and echoing voice, he led them on without looking behind.

Forward they rushed through a narrow, winding lane, with a small stream crossing it in the bottom of the valley; but ere the multitude had proceeded half a mile, swelling their numbers by some peasants who had been working in the fields, they were suddenly met by the white-haired Lord of Plessy, and three attendants, galloping down at full speed towards the village, the flames of which had been observed from the watch-tower of the castle. The good old baron was all eagerness to give aid to his people in the calamity under which he thought they were suffering, and he was within twenty or thirty yards of Caillet and his followers before he saw the threatening aspect of the crowd.

At that moment, however, the thundering voice of the leader of the insurrection exclaimed, somewhat too soon for his own purpose, "This

is one of the tyrants ! Upon him, upon him, my men, and tear him to pieces !” And he himself rushed forward to seize the bridle of the old lord.

But one of the nobleman’s attendants spurred forward his horse before his master, exclaiming, “ Fly, my lord, fly ! We are too few to resist.” The Lord of Plessy and the rest, confused and astounded, and guessing but vaguely what had occurred, turned their horses and fled at full speed towards the castle, while the furious mob darted upon the gallant servant who had devoted himself for his master, and ere he could strike three strokes in his own defence, had pulled him from his horse, and dashed his brains out with an axe.

Caillet caught the beast the man had ridden by the bridle, and sprang at once into the saddle, exclaiming, “ Follow me quickly ! we must not lose our advantage. If you delay a moment you will have to choose another leader ;” and thus saying, he galloped on at full speed after the Lord of Plessy and his attendants.

The crowd who came behind quickened their

pace, and hurried forward as fast as possible; but they could not keep pace with Caillet, and at the turn of the road which led up towards the castle, lost sight of him altogether. Some anxiety and apprehension took possession of them, and made them waver for a moment; but Jacques Morne, waving a heavy axe over his head, exclaimed, "Run, men, run! Why do you pause? If you hesitate he will be killed before we are there."

Onward they rushed again, and in two minutes more the barbican of the castle was before them. The sight that they there saw renewed their courage, and roused them into fury. Caillet himself had reached the place almost at the same moment with its lord, and to insure that the gates of the outwork should not be shut, had sprung from the horse which bore him, and plunged his sword into the animal's chest. Falling dead under the archway, the carcass blocked up the way, and both served as a rampart for the bold man who stood there unsupported against the armed followers of the feudal chief, and prevented the portcullis from

falling completely, or the heavy door beyond from being closed.

All was confusion and bustle in the gate, though only a few of the usual guards had as yet arrived. Some were endeavouring to drag the horse away, some were striking at Caillet with swords and partisans, some were calling for cross-bows and quarrels to shoot him as he stood; but as the head of the rushing multitude appeared and came on with a wild yell of rage and exultation, a panic seized upon the soldiery, and abandoning the barbican and the drawbridge, they sought for safety within the walls of the castle itself.

“ Victory ! victory ! ” shouted Caillet : “ we have won the first triumph. On, on, my men, and the place will soon be ours.”

The crowd rushed forward; the portcullis, which had partly fallen, was soon raised; the barbican was rifled of the various weapons it contained; and, defended by some shields and casques which had belonged to the soldiery of the place, Caillet and seven of his followers passed the drawbridge, in spite of the arrows



and quarrels which were now showered thickly upon them from the walls. Each man bore with him a load of faggots and wood, which had been found in the outwork, laid up as the warder's winter provision ; and a pile was soon raised against the chief gate of the castle, as high as could be reached. No light, however, was to be had for some minutes ; and when at length one of the peasants, with a flint and steel, contrived to kindle a flame, an arrow from a projecting turret struck his shoulder, and pierced him to the heart. A loud shout of satisfaction burst from the man who had discharged the shaft, and some signs of terror showed themselves amongst the insurgents, at the first appearance of death amongst themselves. But Caillet boldly thrust himself forward into the very aim of the archer, and shaking his clenched hand at him, exclaimed, " In this fire will I burn thy heart ! Revenge, revenge, my friends ! The blood of our brother calls out to us for revenge. Let us spread round the castle while the flame burns down the gate ; perhaps we may find some speedier way in."

His wish was but to occupy the peasantry while the fire did its work; for he knew well that men unaccustomed to warfare are with difficulty brought to wait in inactivity while any preliminary operation is carried on, especially when they are exposed to danger during the delay. Part, then, he left to watch the burning of the gate under cover of the barbican, the rest he led round the castle, affecting to seek another point of entrance. In the mean while, the Lord of Plessy and his attendants, astounded by what had occurred, confused, terrified, and utterly unprepared to offer vigorous resistance to an attack which had never been anticipated, lost much time in wild and hurried consultations; and it was not till the fire had made considerable progress that they thought of pouring down water upon it through the machicoulis. Several minutes more were spent in bringing it up from the well to the tower above the gate, and then it was unfortunately found that the stream fell beyond the spot where the flame was raging, and the water flowed away into the moat.

By this time it was evident that, notwithstanding the plating of iron, the wood-work of the door was beginning to ignite, and another hurried and confused consultation took place, in which some one proposed to parley with the assailants, and try to make some terms. The old lord himself, however, refused to hear of such a disgraceful act; and it was resolved to open the gate for a moment, and, rushing out, endeavour to throw the flaming pile into the ditch.

Unhappily for the besieged, at the instant this determination was executed, Caillet himself had returned from his progress round the walls. He had passed the drawbridge, with Jacques Morne and another, to see what had been the effect of the flame upon the doors, and, notwithstanding the intense heat, was standing almost in the blaze, when the gate was thrown open, and the old lord with ten or twelve men rushed out, scattering the fire before them. For a moment Caillet and his companions were driven back some steps; but his quick and daring mind instantly conceived the object of the enemy, and

he determined to turn their attempt to his own advantage. Suddenly those who were watching under the barbican lost sight of him and his comrades in the midst of the smoke and flame, but the next moment the bold insurgents and their leader appeared again, striking on all sides, and literally surrounded by fire and enemies. At the same time the voice of Caillet was heard shouting aloud, "The gate is won! The gate is won! On, on, my men, and the castle is ours!"

With a wild yell of triumph the multitude rushed across the bridge, and bearing all before them, entered the castle of Plessy together with its devoted lord and his followers. Resistance was now vain, for the numbers of the assailants exceeded so terribly those of the defenders of the castle, that the lack of arms and discipline was far more than compensated. One or two of the men of Plessis, struck with panic, threw down their weapons, and declared they would surrender, forgetting that the enemy had none of the conventional feelings and principles of action which are to be found amongst regular soldiery. They had now, however, a terrible lesson to

learn; that those who know no mercy will be shown to them if defeated, show no mercy themselves when successful. The offer to surrender, the cries for quarter, were met by knives in the throats or in the hearts of the defeated garrison. Those who were not killed by the first blow were trodden to death under the feet of the multitude, which, rushing vehemently forward one man behind another, drove all before them, or trampled down without mercy those that fell. On, on they poured through the courts and narrow passages of the castle, slaying without remorse all the men they found; and still in the front of the brutal crowd was the tall and powerful form of William Caillet, casting himself upon any who yet dared to resist, and accomplishing in a moment, by skill of arms, what his rude followers sometimes failed to do by force. On, on they poured, deluging the pavement with blood, strewing the court-yards with corpses, and shouting with savage delight at every head that fell, till at length the lower part of the castle was entirely cleared, and up the

narrow staircase in the keep they rushed, led on by Caillet and some of the most fierce and determined of his comrades.

Here, however, the last desperate opposition was prepared for them. The Lord of Plessy himself, and his few surviving followers, stood side by side at the top of the first flight of steps, determined to keep that narrow passage so long as an arm could wave or a heart could beat. They ranged themselves in double row, the first rank armed with swords and battle-axes, and the men behind passing their shortened lances between their companions in front. It was an awful moment, but each heart was armed with something more than courage. The women and the children were above; and they who had hitherto fought with resolute valour, for their own lives, now struck for what was dearer still, for the best, bright, dear gifts of human existence. "There is hope," said the Lord of Plessy, as he took his station, "there is still hope, while one man guards this staircase! The news of the attack will soon be known; people will come to our rescue from

St. Leu and Clermont, and we shall save the women and children; let some one above hang out a black flag from the top of the tower. — Hark! the wretches are rushing up.”

As he spoke, a tall, athletic man, who had been the blacksmith at St. Leu, rushed past Caillet to be first in the work of butchery; but while he was still ascending, the old noble took a step forward, raised his battle axe in the air, and struck the broad swarthy brow of the insurgent with the clear sharp edge of the weapon, felling him to the ground like an ox under the blow of the butcher. His brains strewed the stone steps as Caillet and Jacques Morne ascended; and the dauntless aspect of the old lord and his companions made even the bold leader of the insurgents pause for a moment, to think how he might best attack them.

The means that suggested themselves were like the man who hesitated not to seize them. “Cover my head, Jacques Morne,” he cried, and, bending down, he raised the yet warm and quivering form of the dead man in his strong arms.



The Lord of Plessy viewed him with a scornful smile, thinking that he was going to bear the corpse away; but heaving it up with his full strength, Caillet cast it at once upon the spears and axes of the men above, and then rushed forward, sword in hand, into the midst, before they could strike him from above. The rest of the insurgents sprang after him, shouting their triumph, and in three minutes the white hair of the old baron lay dabbled with gore amongst the corpses of his last gallant followers.

The insurgents paused not in their work: there was a door on the other side of the landing towards which they ran at once. They found it fastened strongly on the inside; but it was instantly dashed open; and a large chamber or upper hall presented itself, at the farther side of which stood some seven or eight women, with their eyes fixed in an agony of terror upon the opening door. In the middle was a young lady of noble mien, with her hands clasped, and three children clinging round her knees. The moment she saw the faces

of the insurgents, she uttered a shrill cry, and looked behind her as if for some means of escape.—There was none; and the next impulse brought her to the feet of Caillet, exclaiming, “Have pity! have pity!—You have killed my father, my husband has long been dead, slay me, too, if you will; but, oh! spare my children!”

Caillet paused, and put his hand to his head, while those who followed him rushed on towards the shrieking group at the other side of the room. He seemed to hesitate for a moment; but the instant after, muttering to himself, “They must be bound by deeds that can never be forgiven,” he spurned the lady from him, exclaiming, “I slay you not, but I will not save you!” and turned towards the door, leaving his infuriated followers mad with blood and lust to work their horrid will upon the defenceless beings who were now all that remained alive of the former numerous inhabitants of the castle.

Shriek after shriek rang from the hall, as Caillet forced his way out through the multitude who were thronging into it; and as soon as

he was in the open air, he paused and listened, till the cries of agony and horror ceased ; and then, while a loud hoarse laugh from some human demon succeeded, he muttered, “ There is no retreat for them now ! They are mine for ever ! ”

## CHAP. XII.

A VICTORY achieved — what a grand thing it is, a victory achieved ! In any course of action, moral or physical, whether it be in the strife of contending thousands, in the daily battle-field of our rivalry with other men, in the fierce and bitter struggle with our own passions, or in our warfare against the stern opposition of circumstances, a victory gained is always a grand thing that bears up the heart, like a triumphant general upon the shields of his conquering soldiery. But even in the ordinary conflicts of hostile armies, cases will occur when the successful commander — while shouts of success ring around, and glory prepares her laurel for his brow — lies writhing in the agony of wounds and shattered limbs, with the frowning image of death before his eyes, ready to snatch the wreath from off his head.

Thus stood William Caillet in the court of the castle of Plessy : the victory was won, and it was a double victory, for it was not only that he had triumphed over the foes that opposed him, but likewise over the supporters who followed him. He had trampled the one under his feet, he had bound the others to his cause with chains that they could not break ; but still out of the strife he had come wounded and shattered, not in limbs and in body, but in spirit and in heart. The dark end of all, the sure damnation of the future, was for a moment before his eyes ; and the consciousness of having accomplished the first great triumphant step in the career that he had longed for, scarcely made up for the fiery agony of the means by which it was worked out. Each blow that he had struck, each step that he had taken, seemed to have crushed some of those better feelings that linger like reluctant angels to the very last, long after all hope of repentance and reformation seem extinguished, and the pang of their parting came upon him along with the exultation of victory.

He stood for more than a minute, then, in deep thought at the foot of the staircase; and a minute in the midst of such scenes is equal to years at any other period. He was interrupted at last, however, by one of those who were hurrying about through the courts, in the chambers, and amongst the corridors of the castle, inquiring with an unsated appetite for blood if there were any more to slay.

"Where go you, Caillet?" demanded the man, as his leader took a step forward on seeing him approach.

"I go to set free old Thibalt la Rue," replied Caillet.

"He is in the little tower at the end of the court," said the peasant; "I saw his thin white face peeping through the bars."

Caillet strode down and crossed the courtyard, gazing with a smile of scornful satisfaction upon the dead bodies of some of the soldiers as he passed, and muttering to himself, "These mighty lords! these mighty lords!" A few moments brought him to the tower the man had spoken of, and looking up, he still saw the

countenance of old Thibalt gazing through the grating. Two heavy bolts upon the door were soon drawn ; but there still remained a lock, and Caillet was searching for some means of dashing it off, when the voice of old Thibalt exclaimed from above, "There is an axe in that man's hand in the middle of the court." Without reply, Caillet turned thither, and with some difficulty wrenched the battle axe from the stern grasp in which the dead man held it. A single blow then dashed the lock to atoms; and as Caillet threw open the door, the form of old Thibalt was seen descending the stairs. The old villain said nothing, but grasped his liberator's hand, and then taking a step or two forward, gazed into the faces of two or three of the dead men with a quiet inquisitive grin, in which contempt and triumph were strangely blended.

"A good beginning, Caillet," he said, "a good beginning: they have fleshed themselves well. What are they about now, and where are they? Let there be no sparing. — Blood, blood's the thing."

"No fear of that, no fear of that," answered



Caillet: "they have had blood enough; too much, indeed!"

"That can't be, that can't be," cried the old man: "they must drink to the very dregs, Caillet, if you would have any thing like success. First, because blood is like wine to a drunken man, the more he takes the more he must have; next, because this blood can never be forgiven, so that each man that joins us must have his baptism in gore; next, because as long as there is one drop of this noble blood left in France, there will be war between it and ours. Let them drink deep, Caillet, let them drink deep! Break down the bridge behind your people, and they must go forward. Where are they now?"

"Murdering the women and children," replied Caillet, "up in the keep there."

"That is right, that is right," cried Thibalt, rubbing his hands with a low laugh; "kill the mother serpent, and crush the eggs. Now, let you and I go and seek for the gold."

"Not you and I only," said Caillet sternly. "We must call others to help, and to witness.

I come to free the people of France, not to seek for wealth for myself."

The old man looked disappointed; and he replied with a sneering turn of the lip, "Do you think, Caillet, that these people will so deal with you likewise? Will not they get all the gold that they can, and let you know nothing about it?"

"The first that does so shall die," rejoined Caillet; "and I will take means to insure that it is not done undiscovered."

"You are wrong, you are wrong," said Thibalt, setting his teeth bitterly. "Wealth is always power, Caillet; every other sort is uncertain. You can always buy men even when you cannot command them. Bethink thee, Caillet; the time may come when some one rises up to oppose thee, some one as full of knowledge and strength as thou art. If thou hast secured to thyself wealth in the mean while, thou hast still the advantage, and wilt triumph over him. But if thou hast not, he will triumph over thee, for novelty will be in his favour. Come, let you

and I go and seek for gold, else it will be too late."

But Caillet kept his purpose firmly, replying with a sharp sneer, "I seek it not, Thibalt, and I will take care that you seek it not either; for if you do none will share it with you, and none will find any where you have passed."

Thibalt would fain have resisted; but he found, not without bitterness and disappointment, that the bold man with whom he was leagued had assumed that command which his powers of mind naturally bestowed upon him, and that Caillet was determined both to lead and to be obeyed. Perceiving that opposition for the time was in vain, the ancient knave followed his companion in search of some of the other insurgents. He, indeed, speculated upon thwarting him at some future period, and seizing upon a greater share of authority than Caillet seemed willing to assign him. But when they had joined a party of some twenty or thirty of the rebels who by this time had gathered together in the court, and he saw the enthusiasm with which the people regarded their

leader, the power with which he swayed their passions, and the prompt obedience which every one was prepared to show, Thibalt perceived that he must not hope to be more than second, and made up his mind to secure to himself that station.

One by one the insurgents poured forth from various parts of the castle ; and just as the evening was falling they assembled in the great court, round the pile of every sort of plunder which had been taken in the castle of Plessy. To blood-thirsty vengeance now succeeded another appetite : — rapine glared in the eager eyes and fierce countenances of the men around as they gazed upon piles of wealth, such as in the wildest dreams of imagination they never expected to call their own. For his part, Caillet left them to assign what share they would to their leader ; and in the joy and triumph of the moment they were liberal, declaring that of all booty taken from the nobles one eighth part should be allotted to him, who had led them on to their first success.

“ I receive it,” said Caillet, “ not for my own

sake, but for yours, for we shall need money to meet many expenses that you dream not of. One half of what you give me I set apart for the common use of the great cause, the other I divide between myself and good old Thibault la Rue, who has sacrificed every thing for us, so that his portion, whatever it be in the general distribution, shall be equal to my own."

All that Caillet said was, for the time being, law to those that surrounded him; for, in fact, he had at that moment every thing in his favour to give him authority over the peasantry of France: high education, natural genius, skill in arms and in all sort of exercises, great eloquence, keen foresight, dauntless courage, corporeal vigour, beauty, and grace, inexhaustible activity, unshakable hardness of constitution. He felt all these advantages, too, and the very consciousness of his power served but to augment it. There was one feeling, indeed, in his bosom, which might have diminished his influence if indulged. It was not the wild, rash, passionate love which he felt towards Adela de Mauvinet; for that he knew might lead him

on to efforts almost superhuman. It was not the burning thirst for revenge against those who hitherto had thwarted him ; for that would carry him forward even more fiercely in the path which it was necessary for him to pursue. It was, that something like remorse was still present in his heart ; that the natural effect of the education he had received was to make him look upon deeds of mere butchery with some degree of horror.

About two hours after the partition of the booty had been made, Caillet and Thibalt sat above, in one of the higher rooms of the keep, upon pretence of taking counsel in regard to what was next to be done, while their comrades revelled below ; but, in reality, for the purpose of escaping for the time from a scene of brutal excess. Caillet had already taken steps for the defence of himself and his companions, should they be attacked during the night ; and his measures displayed a deep insight into the characters of all around. He had chosen out some twenty men, whose nature, though fierce and resolute, was abhorrent to

mere animal indulgence, and had appointed them to guard the castle while the rest wallowed in wine and gluttony. Each of those he chose had his passion, as Caillet well knew. With one it was blood, with another it was gold, with another it was authority; but with none of them was it the love of dainty food or intoxicating drink. Still some inducement was necessary to make them relish the solitary watch of the castle wall while their companions were making merry within; and Caillet, as he had no power to order, had picked them out from the rest, and had led them to the task he assigned them by the very means to which their several characters rendered them most susceptible. To one he had given money from his own store; to another he had held out the prospect of command; to a third he had spoken of the proposed massacre of the following day; and he had met with no opposition from any, but all obeyed with a promptitude which paved the way for that sort of discipline, if it may be so called, which he intended soon to introduce.

The two chief insurgents then conferred to-



gether in the chamber which had once been the lady's bower in the castle of Plessy. The dead bodies had been removed, and the gold and trinkets which had been found there had long before been carried away, as we have said, and distributed amongst the plunderers. Many another decoration, however, remained; and as Caillet sat by the table with his head leaning moodily upon his hand, he rolled his eyes over the hangings of silk and fine linen that covered the walls like the curtains of a tent, and thought of the soft and happy hours which might there have passed, the scenes of domestic love and joy that were now at an end for ever. The dreams of his own youthful years, the hopes and aspirations of the purer part of his being, came like the long sad train of early friends departed which will sometimes throng upon our slumber.

But as in sleep, also, such visions of the past were mingled with the sterner realities of the present. The image of the lady of that bower, herself, rose up before the wand of the enchanter, Imagination: he saw her in her calm

beauty as she might have moved through those halls that morning; he saw her with her clasped hands in that terrible hour when he first burst upon her sight; he saw her at his knees praying for that mercy which he had refused to grant; and at the same time, from the hall beneath, rose up in loud revelry the voices of the very men who had polluted and destroyed her.

For a moment Caillet became sick at heart, and again he pressed his hand upon that brow where the fiend crime had stamped, in characters of fire, the sentence of eternal condemnation. His hell had begun upon earth, but he felt that he must be the demon altogether. The burden of remorse, the weight of irrevocable sins, the impossibility of retreat, the wild burning thirst for more which always follows wickedness, urged him to cast away every human feeling; and after clenching his hands hard, and setting his teeth, as if to smother in his own bosom the last sighs of humanity, he rose slowly from the table, took up the lamp that stood before him, and de-

liberately applied the light in several places to the hangings of the room.

Old Thibalt laughed aloud. In an instant all was in a blaze ; and in less than half an hour, from the watch-towers of the country round was seen a tall flame, like a cathedral spire of fire, rising up from the devoted castle of Plessy.

## CHAP. XIII.

IT was the same sweet calm evening in the early year which, as we have related in the last chapter, was blackened by the first outbreak of the most bloody and ferocious insurrection that was ever recorded by the page of history, when a large body of horsemen, in number perhaps fifty, accompanied by twelve or fourteen women, arrived at a little village in the Beauvoisis not above twelve miles from the fated castle of Plessy.

We may well call it fated; for had that troop of veteran soldiers but united with the force in Beauvais and St. Leu, and turned its arms against the insurgents, the Jacquerie would have been nipped in the bud, and would never have brought forth the baleful fruit it did; but, alas! the leader of that body and those who were with him were utterly unaware of the events that were taking place so near. They had

made inquiries during the morning, and had found that all the parties of adventurers which had lately scourged that part of the country had been called away, by the prospect of greater gain, into the neighbourhood of Paris, and that the whole of the Beauvoisis was now free from foreign plunderers. Thus with a feeling of perfect security they journeyed on gaily and happily; and on arriving at the little village which I have mentioned paused to get some refreshment from the country people. Hostelrie, indeed, there was none, but the gentleman at the head of the band seemed well known to the peasantry; and every thing that could be found was speedily brought forth to set before the Lord of Mauvinet, and his fair daughter Adela, as they sat upon the little green that ran between two rows of houses, one on either side.

“Thanks, my good woman, thanks,” said the Lord of Mauvinet, as he rose from the grass: “your milk is better than in our more southern land of Touraine; and I hope and trust you have not suffered so severely here as

our good people on the banks of the once merry Loire."

"We have been somewhat better off than our neighbours, noble sir," replied the woman who served them, taking with lowly reverence some pieces of money that the Lord of Mauvinet gave her: "you see the forest shelters us here, beau sire; but the folks out in the open country have been driven almost to despair. I know hundreds of them who have fed all the winter upon acorns."

"Poor souls!" cried the Lord of Mauvinet, "we must do somewhat to help them, and that right speedily. It is sad to hear of such misery; and the more patiently our peasantry bear it, the more terrible it is to witness."

"Ay, sir, they do bear it patiently," said the woman, "but there are some bad spirits amongst them too. That same William Caillet has been roaming about for the last three months, and ——"

"If I catch him," interrupted the Lord of Mauvinet, "he shall curse the day that he was born. Does he show himself openly then?"

The Lord of St. Leu wrote me that he would cause him to be seized long ago."

"Ah! noble sir, but the good lord has not the power," replied the woman; and looking fearfully around, she added, in a low tone, "why, I have just now heard that this very morning, the bailiff of the Lord of St. Leu found him at Chapelle en Mont and tried to seize him, but that Caillet killed the bailiff and an archer that was with him too."

"I will to St. Leu this night!" exclaimed the Lord of Mauvinet.—"Adela, you shall go on with the rest, and I, with Huguenin and five of the men-at-arms, will turn aside at the top of the hill, that I may confer with my noble friend, and insure that this monster roams the country no more."

Adela, however, pleaded hard to accompany him. She would fain, she said, see her fair friend Margaret of St. Leu; and she loved not to ride at the head of a troop of men-at-arms without her father or her brother as a companion.

"We must not burden the good lord," an-



swered the count, "with too many unexpected guests."

But Adela still entreated; and at length it was so arranged, that she, with five of the men-at-arms, should go with her father, sending on her women and the rest of the troop to the place where they had originally proposed to stop.

"There is no time for delay, then," said the Lord of Mauvinet, "for we are far from St. Leu, and it will be dark long ere we reach it. Let your travelling gear, Adela, be charged behind one of the men-at-arms! We must quicken the speed of our horses, for we have lost much time by the way."

No long preparations were requisite, and the troop was soon once more in motion. The road they took wound through the forest and up one of the numerous hills which diversified the woodland, passing not very far from the spot where stood the hut which Caillet had tenanted for many weeks. The whole country was perfectly well known to the Lord of Mauvinet; and halting where the road to St. Leu branched off from that which led to Beaumont, he sent

forward the greater part of the troop, while he, with Adela and the four or five men that he had chosen to accompany him, pursued the same path which the Captal de Buch had taken a month or two before. But instead of embarrassing himself in the intricacies of the forest, he followed a direct course towards St. Leu, skirting along the woods as they fringed the top of the hill. A wide scene was thence exposed to his eye; for although the patches of brushwood sometimes crossed the road and ran a considerable way down the slope, the declivity was in general so considerable as to enable a mounted cavalier to see over the whole country towards Beauvais and La Houssaye.

As they proceeded, however, the sun, which had been casting long shadows over the scene during the whole of the latter part of their ride, sank beneath the horizon altogether, and after a brief moment or two of twilight, night fell, and the stars came brightly out in the heaven above. Still the Lord of Mauvinet rode on without any apprehension, conversing

with his daughter on the beauty of the night, and calculating when the moon would rise.

“ I think she is coming up now, my father,” said Adela, after they had gone on for about half an hour in darkness : — “ what a red light she gives at this time of the year, when low in the sky ! ”

The count looked out towards the part of the horizon to which she pointed, and for a moment or two made no reply, watching a faint rosy streak that hung upon some low clouds on the edge of the sky.

“ That cannot be the moon, Adela,” he answered at length — “ that is to the westward. It must be the light of some fire that the poor peasantry have kindled to warm themselves by. It is probably nearer to us than it seems. But it is increasing very rapidly. How the dull red glare flickers against the heavens ! and see, there is smoke curling up in the midst of the blaze, like some dark demon in his fiery element. — Where can that be, Huguenin ? ” he continued, drawing in his rein. “ It must surely be at Plessy.”

“ It is farther than Plessy, I should think,

my lord," replied the gentleman to whom he addressed himself.

But almost as he spoke, the blaze appeared well nigh extinguished for a moment, and then rose up in a pyramid of light, rendering every object round almost as bright as day. The Lord of Mauvinet spurred on his horse to a spot a few yards in advance, for the purpose of obtaining a better sight; and thence the towers of Plessy were plainly to be distinguished, with the fire pouring through the windows of the keep, and the spire of flame topping the dungeon tower.

"By Heaven!" exclaimed the count, "it is the castle itself. On my knighthood, I must ride down to see if I can aid them. What can I do with thee, my Adela? Take Huguenin and go on to St. Leu."

"Nay," said Adela, "there are some cottages not far on. Do you not remember the beautiful child that was bitten by the viper just as we were passing one day, and that I cured it with the oil my uncle brought from Palestine?"

"Yes, I remember well," replied the count,

quickly; "but what of that, Adela? wilt thou stay there? The people are most likely gone to sleep by this time."

"Let us try," said Adela. "It is straight between Plessy and St. Leu, and you can take me with you as you return: you cannot be long, my father, for that castle is well nigh down, I fear."

"I fear so too," answered the count; "but let us make haste, dear child. Once I have bestowed thee safely, I shall soon be down and back again."

They accordingly rode on, and approached a wild-looking hut, which has been already described in this book. It was that of Jacques Morne. As they drew up their horses, a momentary apprehension, a sort of presentiment of evil, seemed to cross the mind of the count. "Keep Huguenin with thee, my child," he said: "ever since that villain Caillet's conduct, I fear for thee, Adela."

"Oh, there is no danger, my father," replied the lady: "these good people would give their life for me. Never shall I forget how the

woman watched me as I poured the oil into the viper's bite, and how she blessed me when the child looked up and smiled again."

While they had been speaking, one of the men-at-arms had dismounted, and knocked with his gauntlet at the door. A female voice almost immediately demanded, "Who is there? Is it thou, Jacques?"

"It is I, good mother," replied Adela, riding up to the door: "I want to rest with you awhile."

The woman undid the bolt and came forth, gazing wildly under her bent brows at the lady and the armed men. She gave Adela no welcome; but her looks and her apparel spoke so much misery, that the fair girl believed want to be the cause of her coldness; and dismounting from her horse, without fear or hesitation, she said, "Do you not remember me, good mother? How is your sweet boy that was bitten by the viper?"

"He has been worse bitten by the viper hunger," replied the woman: "we have been starving, lady."

“ Well you shall starve no longer,” rejoined Adela, while one of the men took her horse and fastened it to a tree.

“ I know that,” answered the woman, wildly, “ those days have passed.”

“ Well, good woman, I will wait here a while,” continued Adela, “ till the count comes back.— Ride on, my dear father — I shall be quite safe here.”

“ You had better stay and watch without, Huguenin,” said the count.

But the wife of Jacques Morne now exclaimed eagerly, though with the same wild look, “ She is safe, noble sir, she is quite safe — no one shall harm her here, if I were to die for it. Do you think any one should hurt, in my cottage, the lady that saved my child ?”

“ Nay, I doubt you not,” replied the count, turning away without giving any farther orders; and Huguenin, who to say the truth was eager to see what was going on below, rode after his lord, leaving Adela in the hut.

The Lord of Mauvinet put his horse into a quick pace, and galloped rapidly over the two



miles that lay between the hut of the swineherd and the serfs' village of Plessy en Val. The fire still raged; and though now and then the trees cut off the view of the castle, and threw a dark shadow over the road, the light was still so strong, either direct from the burning building or reflected from the sky, that every object was quite distinct at some distance. At the entrance of the place, the Lord of Mauvinet drew up his horse in surprise and horror at the sight of one of the peasants lying dead at his own door, and springing to the ground he looked into the hut. It was partly burnt, but the fire seemed to have gone out of itself after merely consuming the rafters. On the floor lay a woman and three children weltering in their blood, and the count drew back troubled and bewildered.

"What can be the meaning of this?" he said. "Some band of adventurers must have sacked the place and taken the castle. This is no accidental fire, Huguenin."

"I fear that it is not, beau sire," replied Hu-

guenin; "but look, there's a head peeping at us from behind that second cottage. It is a woman; she takes us for some of the companions."

"Come hither, my poor girl," said the count speaking aloud — "we will not hurt, but rather defend thee."

His voice caught the woman's ear; and after twice looking cautiously out from behind the building, she ventured to come forth altogether: at first approaching slowly, but then running on and clasping the count's knees.

"Fly, my lord! fly!" she cried — "fly, or they will murder you too!"

"Who?" demanded the Lord of Mauvinet, raising the young woman from the ground. "Who has done all that bloody work?"

"Fly, fly!" reiterated the poor creature, wildly: "get into the forest and hide you among the trees: I have left my baby amongst the bushes, and come to see if my husband be living or dead."

"But who?" demanded the count again, "who are they that have outdone all the wicked-

ness of others, and have butchered the poor peasantry in their huts?"

"It is William Caillet and his people," answered the woman: "there are thousands and tens of thousands. They have taken Plessy, and murdered my good lord, and now they have set fire to the castle, and will soon be coming back again. So fly if you would save your lives."

The Lord of Mauvinet pressed his hand upon his brow, cursing the day that he had ever raised the villain who had so ill requited all his kindness from the low state in which he had first found him. "Thousands, and tens of thousands?" he cried. "Taken the castle of Plessy, a strongly defended fortress?— But my child, Huguenin! my child! We must indeed fly, and take her from this place, and that right quickly."

As he spoke, he remounted his horse, and was turning his bridle to go back by the road he came, but the woman caught the rein, exclaiming, "Not that way, not that way! Look, look! They are going over the hill;" and

directing his eyes towards the fields, the Lord of Mauvinet perceived, at the distance of half a mile, a large troop of men, some four or five hundred in number, already between him and the cottage of the swineherd Morne. They were holding no array, though keeping close together; but from the bright reflection of the fire, from various weapons of steel that they carried on their shoulders, it was evident that they were well armed. At the same time a sound of loud shouting and singing came from the road to Plessy, and the woman exclaimed, "Hark, hark! they are upon that road too. They will kill us if they find us here."

"I must up the hill at all risks," cried the Lord of Mauvinet. "Let go my rein, girl! My daughter is at the swineherd's hut above."

"What, Morne?" she asked, "Jacques Morne? why he is one of the chief butchers! Your daughter is dead by this time; for they have vowed not to leave one drop of noble blood unspilled throughout the land.—If you will go, come hither with me. I will guide you to the back of the hut by a shorter way."

“Take her up behind thee, François,” cried the count, “and ride on as she directs.”

“Speed ! speed !” cried the woman, as soon as the man had raised her on his horse. “They are coming quick — I hear them, and they will kill us all as they did Martin the wheelright. — Through between those cottages there — amongst the willows by the stream. — Now up,” she continued, as they rode along, “across that break in the wood, and then, the narrow road to the left. — It is steep and slippery.”

Onward, however, they galloped without a moment’s pause, till they had reached the top of the hill.

“Now which way?” demanded the Lord of Mauvinet.

“Hush ! speak low,” said the woman, “for you are near. Let me down — my babe lies under those trees. Follow the path straight on — it will lead you to the styes behind the hut. Perchance you may get there before them, and save your daughter ; but if you find them there, you may die with her, but not deliver her.”

The count spurred forward quickly though

more cautiously, the trees for some way shutting out all view beyond. A moment or two after, however, the light of the still burning fire came through the branches, and the next instant he could distinguish the mass of low buildings in which were kept the swine. But, alas! there came upon his ear the sound of loud voices talking and laughing; and as he looked between the trees, he saw the multitude, some sitting, some standing at a halt before the cottage, where he had left his child.

## CHAP. XIV.

MANY are the lessons that the guileless heart of youth requires ere it learns the hard and terrible task of suspicion ; and though, assuredly, Adela had seen enough of baseness and ingratitude, in one who had been loaded with benefits, to make her doubt that any tie can bind the corrupt spirit of man, yet she entered the cottage of the swineherd without the slightest fear, and approached a large fire near which was placed the bed of the peasant's children. They were buried in profound sleep, on their lowly couch of dried rushes and withered leaves ; and Adela stooped down, with a feeling of natural satisfaction, to look at the little being she had saved from almost certain death.

When she raised her head again, two things struck her with some surprise, and created the first apprehension that had entered her



mind. The woman was still standing at the door, gazing upon her with an expression difficult to describe. It could be scarcely called fierce, and yet there was a wild, glaring savageness in her eyes that startled and alarmed her young guest. There was a sort of hesitation, a doubt, even perhaps a shade of fear in it, that naturally excited terror ; but at the same time, there was a second object even more calculated to create suspicion than the face of the woman herself. On a rough wooden block in the midst of the room, which served for the purpose of a table, appeared a multitude of things that entirely contradicted the tale of starvation which she had told. There were rich meats, and leathern bottles apparently filled with wine. There was a large golden drinking cup too, and another smaller one of silver, with a number of spoons of precious metal, a rich hunting horn, and a bracelet from a lady's arm. Where could all these come from ? The question flashed through Adela's mind in a moment, and a fit of involuntary trembling seized her at the thought.

“ You shake, lady,” said the woman, approaching her — “ it cannot be with cold.”

“ I know not why,” replied Adela hesitating ;  
“ but my father, he will soon be back again,  
and ——”

“ Perhaps he may never come back again,”  
rejoined the woman, sternly. “ How many men  
has he with him ? ”

“ Only five,” replied Adela.

“ And none behind ? ” asked the swineherd’s  
wife.

“ The rest have gone on towards Beaumont,”  
answered Adela. “ Oh God ! why did I not go  
with him ? ”

“ To die ? ” demanded the woman.

“ Ay, if need be,” said the lady, more firmly ;  
“ but why should he die ? Tell me more !  
The adventurers have not left the country, then  
— this is their plunder — and they leave it  
with you, unhappy woman ! — Have you pro-  
mised me protection but to destroy me ? ”

“ No,” answered the swineherd’s wife,  
coming close to her, and speaking in a solemn  
tone ; “ no, lady, I have not. You have been

looking at that child," she continued: "you saved his life, and by that child I swear that I will save yours, or they shall take mine."

"But my father," cried Adela, dropping her riding-glove, and clasping her hands — "oh save him too, then!"

"That I cannot do," she replied: "I am sorry that I let him go on, because I have heard that he is a good man; but if he reach Plessy he dies."

"Then let me ride after him, and tell him not," exclaimed Adela, darting towards the door. But the woman stopped her, saying, "It is all in vain—they are half way there by this time—but perhaps they may meet a warning by the way. They must pass through the village; and if they use their senses, they will find enough to make them draw the bridle there."

Adela covered her eyes with her hands and wept, and the woman stood gazing at her for a minute or two in silence; but at length she added, "Thou art a pretty creature and a good, and perhaps it were as well for thee to die now

as hereafter; but yet I will save thee, even if these men come back."

"They may pass by without dismounting," cried Adela; "and surely, even if they take my father and myself, they will put us to ransom as they did before. But shut the door, good mother, close it well, deaden the fire, and let them think we all sleep — they may pass by without dismounting."

The woman shook her head. "You mistake, you mistake," she said. "These are not people who either give or take ransoms. — It is the peasantry of France, lady, who have risen to slay their oppressors, and to drown out in the blood of our tyrants the very memory of the chains we have broken. The work has begun already. Plessy is taken, its lord and all his minions are dead; and the gold, and the wealth, and the rich food, and the fine wine, which they had hoarded up, while we were starving in misery and wretchedness, is now divided amongst those who had a better right to it than the men who kept it: that is the share of my husband, and one or two others, to whom it fell by lot."

Adela kept her hand pressed tight over her eyes. She durst not say what she felt ; for there was a fierceness in the woman's manner which made her fear that any unguarded word might be made a pretext to betray her to the destroyers, and she only murmured, therefore, " Then your husband is one of them ? "

" Ay is he, lady," answered the woman : " he is at length a man — a human being. He is no longer the beast of the field for any lord ! — But hark ! was not that a sound ? "

" Oh save, save me ! " cried Adela, her natural repugnance to death overcoming every other feeling for the moment.

" Fear not, fear not," replied Jacques Morne's wife : " I will save thee ! " and lowering her tone a little, she added, with a softened manner, " Did you not save my boy ? — But you must do exactly what I tell you," she continued. " It may be difficult ; my husband is a changed man ; and when he came back an hour ago, to leave those things here, he was over the knees in blood. Mercy and fear have no place in his heart now ; and I must conceal you from him if he should

come, though I do not believe he will, for they are going on with all speed to burn the castle of St. Leu or some other place, and they will not be satisfied so long as there is a stronghold left in the Beauvoisis. First, I must lead away your horse—for if they see him, they will suspect the truth—and then I will soon find some place where you may be hidden.”

“Where, where?” cried Adela.

“Wait till I come back and I will show you,” answered the woman, and she turned and left the cottage for a moment or two.

Adela looked wildly round her; there seemed no place where even a child could conceal itself, and in despair she thought of going out into the forest and seeking some obscure spot amongst the trees; but ere she could reach the door, the swineherd’s wife returned, and leading her back, said, “Be not afraid, you shall be here in safety.—I hear them coming over the fields and through the woods,” she continued, “singing and rejoicing in the great deeds that they have done. We shall have bread now—no more lack of food—no more want and starvation:

furred gowns for the children, and milk, and wine, and bread."

While thus she went on, the predominant idea taking up her whole attention, and making her forget the terrors of her guest, Adela stood before her ready to drop, clasping her hands in the wildness of fear, and murmuring incoherent prayers and entreaties, mingled with low words expressive of her apprehensions for her father, which not even the dread of immediate death could banish.

At length the woman noticed her again, exclaiming, "Fear not, poor trembler, fear not, but come hither with me;" and walking slowly and deliberately to the other side of the room, she opened a rude door, which Adela had imagined afforded another outlet into the forest. As soon as it was thrown open, however, she perceived that it led merely to a low narrow receptacle for fuel, in which were piled up, nearly to the top, a number of faggots, composed of dry branches gathered in the wood during the winter season.

"There is room for thee behind," cried the



woman eagerly, as if startled by some sound ;  
“get thee in, round there : lie still, and stir not, whatever thou hearest. — Hark ! they are coming !”

“ Oh, ask for my father,” cried Adela, as with difficulty she made her way into the recess round the pile of faggots.

“Hush !” said the swineherd’s wife — “crouch down behind there. I will leave the door open that they may suspect nothing — stay, I will put a fresh faggot on the fire : then they will seek none themselves ;” and thus saying, she took up one of the bundles of wood and cast it upon the hearth.

In the mean while, Adela, shaking in every limb with terror, lay down behind the pile, listening, with her sense of hearing quickened by fear, to the steps and tones of the men who were approaching. The sounds grew louder every moment as the insurgents came nearer, some singing with drunken ribaldry, some shouting, some laughing, while the hurried and irregular tread of their feet seemed to the poor

girl like the rush of a flood of waters destined to overwhelm her.

In a minute, some one stopped at the door of the hut and shook it violently, while the voice of Jacques Morne exclaimed, "Open, wife, open, it is I. Why, in the fiend's name," he continued, as he entered, "do you bolt the door? Are we not lords and masters now? Come in, Caillet; come in, old Thibalt."

"Lords and masters wot ye?" said the woman. "Not quite that yet, Jacques. You have much to do before you will be that. Know you there have been men-at-arms here since you went?"

"Why did you not kill them, then?" demanded Jacques Morne. "It is no more killing a man-at-arms than a weazel."

"Thou art drunk," said his wife. "Did you not meet them, Caillet?"

"No," answered Caillet: "which way did they take? and how many were there?"

"Some nine or ten," replied the woman; "and as for the way they took I cannot tell. It seemed as if they went towards Plessy."

“ Did you let them know what had happened ? ” demanded Caillet.

“ No, no,” exclaimed the swineherd’s wife ;  
“ I took care not to do that. I thought that they might, perhaps, fall in with you, and get the fate of the others.”

“ If they have gone down to Plessy,” said Caillet, “ they will find plenty ready to deal with them. Know you who they were ? If there be any great man amongst them, it may be as well to go back again to do him honour.”

Adela’s heart sunk, while the woman paused a moment ere she replied, and, small as was the chance of her father’s escape, it was a relief to her to hear the words, “ I marked not their faces, but they seemed common men-at-arms.”

A voice then shouted from without, “ Hallo ! where do we go to ? where do we go to ? Don’t keep us here waiting. — Some say St. Leu, others say Argot.”

“ I come, I come ! ” cried Caillet. “ Take the way to Argot,” he continued, speaking from the door : “ the serfs of the village there will join us, and we can sleep in the huts round

about the castle; so that to-morrow by day-break we have them in a net.— To Argot! to Argot! — Go on, I will follow you.— Give me a cup of wine, Jacques Morne,” he added, “I have a burning thirst upon me.”

“Thou hast drunk blood enough, Caillet,” answered Morne, in a drunken tone; “but it quenches no drought I know; and the more one tastes the more one longs for. I should like to kill a dozen more to-night.”

As he spoke, he moved towards the table where the bottle stood, while Caillet remained with his eyes bent firmly upon the blazing faggots, as if he found a great interest in watching the progress of the devouring element. Adela continued, as before, behind the pile of brushwood, holding her breath, as Jacques Morne came nearer to her, lest even the slightest sound should call his attention. What were her feelings, however, when he suddenly stopped as he was advancing towards the table, and stooped down exclaiming, “Here is a woman’s glove! Who brought it here?”

“Yourself, you fool,” replied his wife readily.

“ You are so drunk you do not know what you are doing. You brought it with the other things, and one of the children had it to play with.”

“ It is a lie !” said Jacques Morne. “ I brought no glove.”

“ Hush, hush !” cried Caillet : “ give me the wine, Jacques Morne, and squabble not for foolery. Wilt thou come with us, or wilt thou not ?”

“ I will stay here and sleep,” replied the swineherd, “ and come to you in the morning !”

“ That thou shalt not !” exclaimed his wife : “ I will have none of thee here till thou hast done more of the good work ; or else I will give thee a petticoat and make thee mind the children, while I take an axe on my shoulder, and follow the deliverers of the land. It is such men as thou art that spoil all things by fancying them done when they are scarce begun.”

“ Thou art right, thou art right !” cried Caillet : “ though we have seized one castle, destroyed the nest of one vulture, yet there

is many another foul brood to be exterminated before we can be at all secure. Those who stop short, in such matters as these, are almost as bad as enemies, for they cool the hearts of others. Come, come, Morne, you have been amongst the first, and must not halt now."

"I will not halt, I will not halt, Caillet!" cried Jacques Morne, who had filled himself a cup of wine, while he gave another to Caillet, and had thereby added to the inebriety which was already upon him. "Here, old Thibalt—drink, man, drink!—I will not halt, Caillet, I will not halt, if all the fiends of hell wanted to keep me;—but this glove, I want to know about this accursed glove!—No, halt? I'll not halt. I'll only sit down for a minute to rest myself, and come on directly;" and as he spoke, he proceeded with somewhat unsteady steps, as if to seek a seat upon the very pile of faggots behind which poor Adela de Mauvinet lay concealed.

Before he reached it, however, he stumbled, and fell prone upon the bed of leaves and rushes where the children lay, waking them in terror

and surprise. His wife scolded vehemently, and would have pushed him out, but Caillet, turning away with a look of contempt, told her to keep him where he was. "He is in no state to go with us," he added; "let him come on to-morrow. — But, my faith, we must have less drunkenness."

Thus saying, he strode to the door, and left the cottage together with old Thibalt, who had taken up the golden cup into which the swineherd had poured the wine, and forgot to put it down ere he departed.

"What is to be done now?" murmured Jacques Morne's wife to herself, looking from her husband to her children. "Hush, hush, Hue! lie down, my boy, and go to sleep again. — Drunken beast, why have you wakened the children?"

"You lie," cried Morne; "I did not waken them; you woke them yourself;" and sitting up on the end of the bed he prepared to rise, though it was evidently with difficulty.

"Ha!" said the woman, a new thought seeming to strike her, "thou shalt have no more



wine ! though thou wouldst drink the whole bottle if thy pitiful stomach would hold it ; but thou shalt have no more, I say ;” and as she spoke she moved to the table, affecting to take the means of further potations out of his reach.

“ I will, I will !” cried Jacques Morne, rushing forward with the obstinacy of drunkenness ; “ I will drink the whole *bottieu*, I declare, as I saw the juggler do at the Cour Plenièrè.”

“ That thou couldst not if thou wouldst, and shouldst not if thou couldst,” replied his wife, affecting to struggle with him for the large leathern bottle. She suffered him to take it easily enough, and setting the mouth to his lips, he drank a long deep draught. Then staggering back to the corner of the bed, he sat for a little while poising the bottle on his knee, and at length raised it once more to his head. He could not hold it up long, however, but let it drop from his hands, spilling part of the contents upon the floor ; and after swaying backwards and forwards for a moment or two, with his eyes half closed, he fell backwards upon the bed dead asleep.

The woman easily hushed the children to sleep again, and then looked out at the door; but she suddenly drew back her head, and waited for a moment listening. Then approaching to the spot where Adela lay, she took her by the hand, and brought her forth, saying, "All is safe now, I think. Drink some of this wine to give you strength. Mount your horse again, and away, either to Beaumont or St. Leu, with all speed."

"But my father, my father?" exclaimed Adela.

"He is safe," said a voice apparently close to her, which she instantly recognised as that of the count; and turning round she gazed over the part of the cottage from which it seemed to proceed, but could see nothing except a small square hole made apparently to look from the hut itself towards the styes for the swine.

The swineherd's wife grasped the fair girl's arm tight, and pointed to Jacques Morne as he lay prostrate on the bed, saying, "My husband shall be safe! Is it not so? I have delivered your life, remember, and I will——"

Ere she could add more, however, the Lord of Mauvinet was in the cottage, and in another instant had clasped Adela to his heart. The woman plucked him by the sleeve, murmuring some anxious questions; but the count turned towards her with a sad and frowning brow, replying, "You have spared and shall be spared; but add not a word: the curse of God is upon such deeds as have been done this day; and, though I take not yon wretch's life, vengeance is not the less sure. Come, my child, come! I have seen all, and heard all, and for your sake the sword rests in the scabbard, which, perhaps, ought to be drawn."

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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